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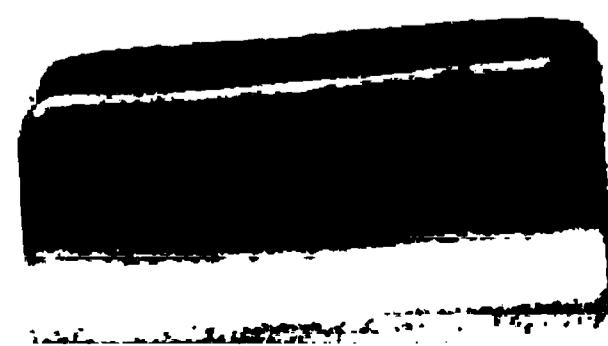
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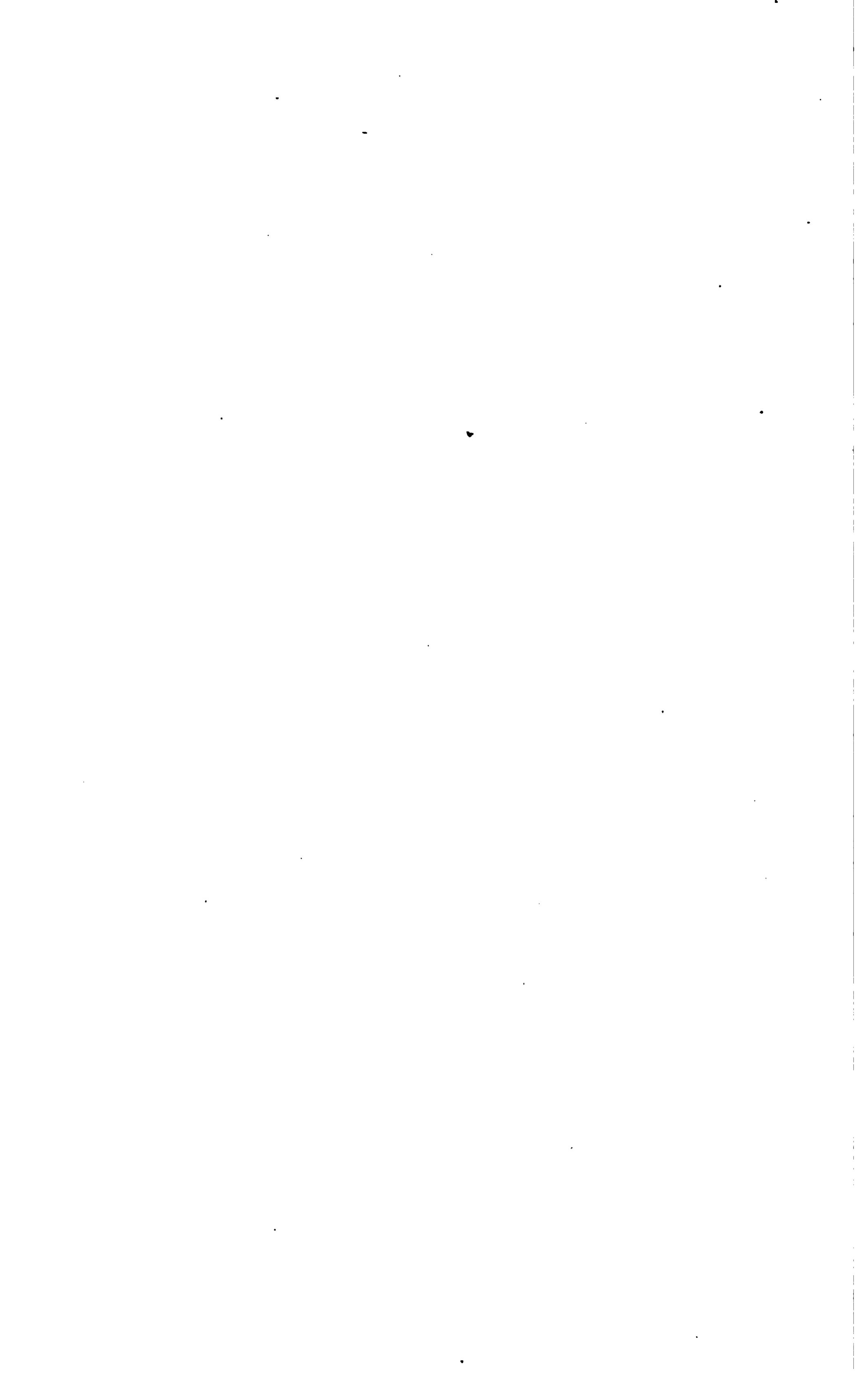
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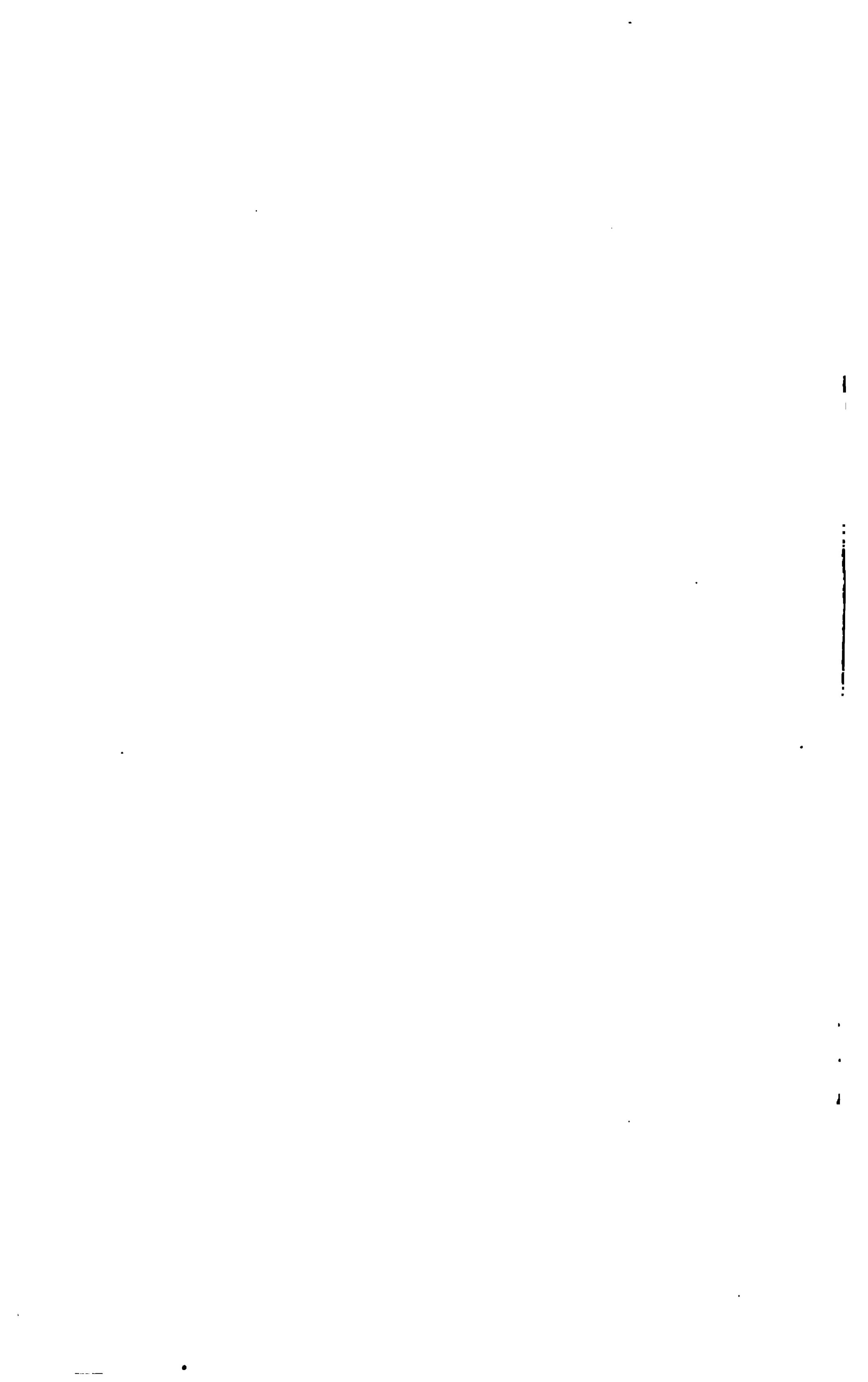
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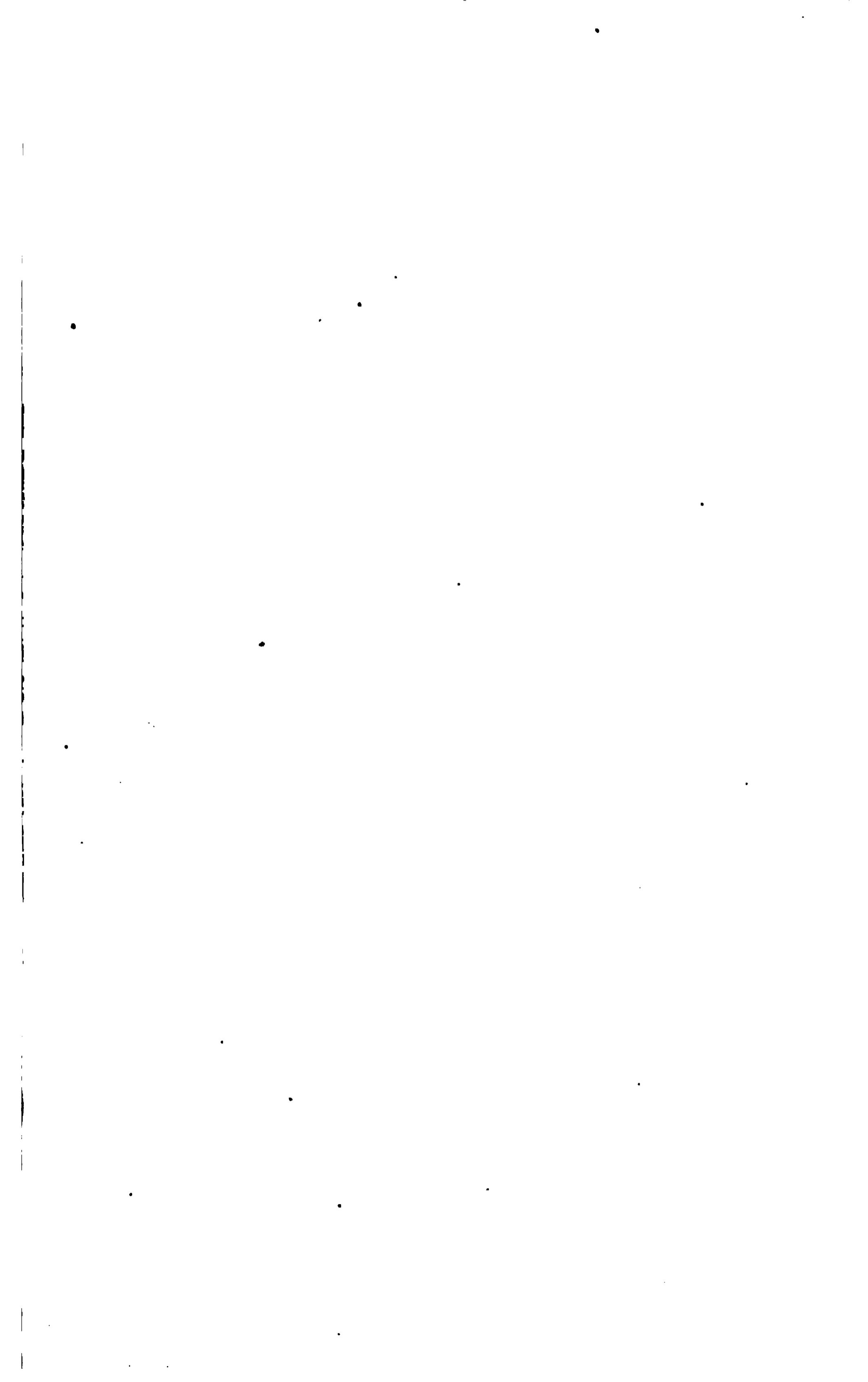


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# THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.



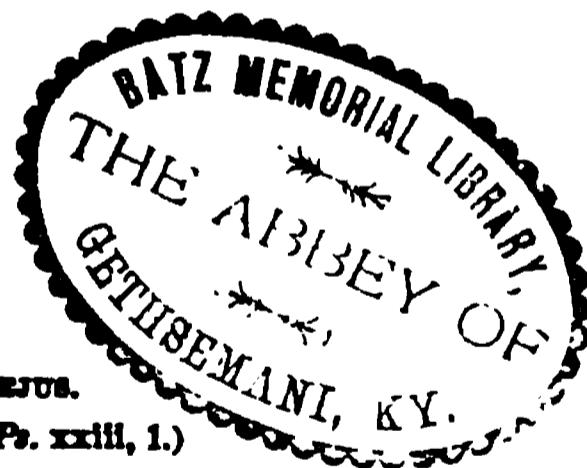
THE CHURCH  
AND  
THE GENTILE WORLD  
AT THE  
FIRST PROMULGATION OF THE GOSPEL.

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH SOON  
AFTER HER BIRTH.

BY THE  
REV. AUG. J. THEBAUD, S. J.

VOL. I.

DOMINI EST TERRA ET PLENITUDINE EJUS.  
—(Ps. xxiii, 1.)



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## PREFACE.

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As soon as God communicated to fallen man his decree of redemption, and promised that "the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent," the Church was born, at least in design. Mankind was to be regenerated, born again; and those who should comply with the conditions of reconciliation would form a society united anew with the Creator. For as the former bonds of union had been broken up by disobedience, and God had been alienated from man by this first sin, it was necessary that, in order to recover what had been lost by this fatal separation, man, on his part, should henceforth obey, submit to the will of his Maker, bow to his authority, and thus deserve to be reconciled with him. In this simple process we have all the elements of a firm religious society.

From that moment down to this there has always been a portion of mankind submissive to the divine laws, and on this account dear to God and worthy of his regard. For them the source of grace, gushing forth, even in anticipation, from the wounds of a dying Saviour, was to flow in rapid and constant streams, to wash, purify, refresh, and regenerate the sons of Adam, changed into sons of God.

This is the great mystic body, whose head is Christ Jesus. As a body it must have unity. The essential and inward character of this is derived certainly from the Head, from the God-man: "In whom all the building being framed together, groweth up into an holy temple in the Lord."\* But besides this essential characteristic of religious unity, there are among men exterior marks of it which must be attentively considered, because they can never be wanting even in the supposition of an imperfect Church, as was the case before Christ. These at all times consist in the profession of the same

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\* *In quo omnis adiunctio constructa crescit in templum sanctum in Domino.*  
—Eph. ii. 21.

faith and the observance of the same divine commands. This kind of unity is absolutely required in every organization worthy of the name of a Church, although since Christ came this is not sufficient, as all theologians know. But, primitively, when apparently there was no organic center, and the members seemed to be left to their own independent action, there was nevertheless for the whole body the necessary influence from the invisible Head which kept the members united together in the same belief and the same morality. This is sufficient to constitute a religious body before its full development, as God intended it should become at last. It can even be maintained that in this embryo state it far transcends the best organized monarchies and republics, whose source of unity is only derived from exterior constitutions and laws, having for their object what is called the temporal welfare of the subjects, and can scarcely be said to reach their souls and to affect in any way the best portion of their nature. The mystic body of which we speak, on the contrary, destined to exist on earth until the end of time, is ruled and governed by a spiritual constitution and spiritual laws, looking to the eternal interests of immortal beings. Their minds are subjected to the control of a positive belief, which all possessing in common makes them brothers in spirit more strictly than if they were all brothers by blood, and born of the same identical father. Let any one seriously reflect on the few following words : to believe absolutely in the same manner what concerns God and the soul ; to have the same views not only of the moral universe but of eternal life itself ; to agree together on the origin of the world and on its future destiny ; to judge of the present life according to the same pattern of appreciation ; to form the same estimate of greatness and vileness, of virtue and vice, of time and eternity. For mind it well, we remain in the generality of the mystic body of Christ as it was at first, even long before the faint adumbrations of the Old Law, and yet we perceive in it a thousand features of solidity and worth which place it far above any purely human commonwealth you can choose. As to its unity in the same moral precepts, it requires a blind man not to see that if any State is happy when it has good laws, these laws, after all, regulate concerns of a very inferior kind and altogether limited to the present time, whilst the moral precepts imposed by Almighty God on the members of his Church, even in its less perfect organization, at the same time that they powerfully secure the material interests of society, look chiefly to a far higher aim, and refer to man's

eternal destiny. This alone would prove the immense superiority of the spiritual society, namely, of the Church, over the best temporal commonwealth, and pagans themselves would be compelled to admit it, should they reflect well on the subject.

It is folly, therefore, to close one's eyes to that great society, which is called the Christian Church, and give all possible attention to the comparatively petty concerns of the material States into which mankind is divided. This comparison of the universality of the one and the necessarily confined limits of the others, would offer, so early as this, considerations of the highest import in support of the absolute precedence of which we speak; but this theme will be better treated of in the work itself, of which it is the main object. Meanwhile it is proper to insist that men do not sufficiently reflect on the pre-eminence, which of right belongs to the spiritual society. Those who have faith know that it was the great object God had in view in creating the world, and that in His mind all other inferior kinds of human social organizations, such as empires, kingdoms, republics, and tribal states, were to be only subsidiary to the first. But those whose faith is either lost or wavering, refuse to acknowledge it and call it a dream. Take away that dream, however, and all the pretended noble institutions by which human society on earth is said to be distinguished, become at once playthings, good only for children or fools. For no man of sense can deny that the great human interests which are debated in the fields of politics, commerce, industry, and international complications, are, after all, pitiful concerns when the greatness of the soul is considered, and our universal aspirations toward eternity are seriously taken into account. The only thing which can redeem them in the opinion of a true man, which gives them a real solidity, and justifies any one in applying himself with all his might in the furtherance of them, is that they are ordered by God to prepare us for a better world, to which the spiritual society alone can introduce us. At any rate, all men, we are sure, will admit that the spiritual body of which many people make so little account, is composed of the best, noblest, and holiest of mankind, when they follow strictly the precepts of the religion which is the precious bond of their sacred union.

Under the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations Christ's mystic body already existed, turned in a holy expectation toward a future Saviour. Since he came, the Christian feels that he is in full communion with the patriarchs of the law of nature, and with the saints

of that of Moses. Of this there can be no possible doubt for any one who has well studied the subject. The hope of a Redeemer by all the nations of the ancient world has been proved beyond question ; and the dogmas and precepts of their natural religion, as it is called, are still a part of the heirloom which has come down to us from the first days of human society. For us, belief and morality are essentially the same that they were for Enoch before the flood, for Abraham, Melchisedech, and Job, after it. As to the Mosaic Law, Christianity has come from the very womb where truth was then concealed ; and to separate both is simply impossible. Christ has not repudiated the Law, but perfected it. Its ceremonies alone have vanished, because they were only types ; and when the reality came types were bound to disappear.

The few phrases contained in the previous paragraph refer to the perpetuity of the Church or its universality in time. It is consequently a commonwealth co-extensive with humanity itself, since until our day it has been clearly so in the past, and its glorious Head has declared with regard to all time to come that in spite of all obstacles it shall subsist forever, and “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Can there be a greater felicity during our short pilgrimage than the consciousness of belonging to a band of brothers, forming an uninterrupted chain, whose first link saw creation, and the last is to close with the last day ? Nay, more, the first link dropped down from heaven, and the last is to be carried by angels into the hands of God himself. Thus do we find in it the realization of our nature’s highest aspirations, since, coming from God, there is for us no rest but in His bosom. And it is not alone in a higher world that we long for union with Him ; but on the way to an eternity of bliss in His embrace, we also irresistibly aspire to a holy companionship with Him, during our short span of life on earth. Every thoughtful man must acknowledge that the first of the mysteries by which we are surrounded is the absolute inability to be fully satisfied with all worldly enjoyments. The more we have the more we wish to possess ; and should we suppose a man master of the whole globe, and safe against any possible loss of power and of delights, we feel convinced that his heart would still be empty, and the more he would have the more he would sink under the sense of the nothingness of everything. The possession of God alone can give us rest even on earth. We must feel that we are truly united with him if we wish to find this life supportable ; otherwise annihilation would be almost preferable.

The Church leads us to that union without which our destiny would be so sad ; and thus she alone fully gratifies our most essential aims by declaring that man can yet hope to have on earth God as a friend and a father. Nay, more, she tells us that Christ has come down from heaven precisely to restore to us the right of being called, and of being in reality, "sons of God."\* The fatal error of pantheism, the first step in the religious decline of mankind, was nothing but an exaggeration of this truth known to men in the most primitive times ; and the universality of the same error when it replaced the former belief, proves that all mankind knew from the beginning the future restoration of this right, lost by the fall. St. Peter declared it emphatically when he said : " He hath given us most great and precious promises ; that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature."†

The whole earth, therefore, was from the beginning destined to be the temporary dwelling-place of a "kingly and sacerdotal race," as St. Peter again calls regenerated mankind.‡ St. Augustine gave it the name of the *City of God*, and described with magnificence its high destinies. Can anything be conceived on earth comparable to her ? Let us examine for a moment this question. First, in her alone true virtue exists by the divine operation of grace. Out of her there cannot be any virtue worthy of the name. Filial piety, maternal love, a burning affection for one's country—true patriotism—are indeed great and holy things. They are highly commendable, even if not inspired by religion. The Church has condemned the proposition of Luther—that all the virtues of pagans were sins ; and for the sake of humanity alone, independently of the submission due to church decrees, all must applaud such a rightful condemnation as this. Yet how they pale before those which the Bride of Christ bids us to practice ! The love of enemies, the forgiveness of injuries, self-sacrifice to the interests of others, the giving up of life itself for the sake of justice and truth ; all those Christian duties which, with us, even children are taught to consider as strict obligations, far surpass all the deeds of the greatest heroes of the world. The heroes of Christianity are governed by far higher principles. For them the Church has invented a golden word, unknown to men before Christ came to give the model of it in his divine person

\* *Fili Dei nominemur et simus.*—I. John, iii. 1.

† II. Peter, i. 4.

‡ I. Peter, ii. 9.

—*Charitas*, which means at the same time Grace and Love, and has opened to humanity the book of a new moral science destined to guide it to the most sublime sphere of duties, yet intended to direct the members of the Church in their daily and most ordinary actions.

Now what is the world without the practice of eminent virtues? A place where the highest of beings would be, not as David has said of men, “a little lower than the angels,” but at best only a little higher than mere animals. For is it not virtue mainly that distinguishes man from animals? All the glitter of wealth and power and even intellect, cannot make society happier, because it cannot make it better. It is by the fulfillment of duty, particularly of the highest range of duty, that the human commonwealth enjoys that happiness for which man feels that he was made. It is easy to say that this is a mere Utopia. It would not be a Utopia, but a most precious reality, if men were willing to carry out the adorable plan of God when he established the Church. For her voice is clear, urgent, full of earnest entreaties, when she unfolds before us the golden advantages of the sublimest virtue. And she never was accused of being impracticable and dreamy. What she has done is a proof of what she could do if she was not thwarted, opposed, reduced often to impotence. But the question returns, Can anything on earth be conceived comparable to her?

In the second place, she possesses the true mastery of the human mind by the sure agency of faith. This is another prerogative which, strange enough, has been turned against her, as if by faith she superseded reason and did away with it, when, on the contrary, she secures it and saves it. It is very well to speak of the infallibility of reason, which every Catholic is bound to respect and believe in. But practically reason often deceives us, and there are few men able to distinguish directly a sound argument from a sophism. St. Thomas, with his powerful mind, knew this well, since in his works he always gives such a vivid plausibility to error until he scatters the phantasm by the clearness of his demonstration. It is well known that many mere philosophers have done nothing else in arguing against Revelation than take up and develop the objections of St. Thomas, without speaking, of course, of his answers, and they have been able at last by this dishonest policy to obtain the leadership of mankind, as they have it in this age, and to be considered as intellectual giants. But independently of this, and independently also of the great thought of Donoso Cortes, that in our day the human mind

seems to be made for receiving approvingly whatever is false and absurd, and, on the contrary, for rejecting whatever is simple and true, there is a strong reason why it should be so whenever faith is not respected, whenever it is repudiated and contradicted, so that the human mind needs really faith for the safe use of its natural faculties, and without it man becomes, as it were, deprived of his reason. It is this, and it should be well attended to : Error knows always so well how to mimic Truth; sophism is so ingenious in clothing itself with plausibility, that man at last, tired of arguing and chopping logic, as they say, ends in being satisfied with mere opinion. What advantage is it to him that in the abstract he can finally reach a strict consequence, and exclaim triumphantly *Eureka*, when he has always to fight his way through innumerable and sharp antagonists ? For no proposition is uttered by a man which is not directly denied by a hundred others. Even should his argument be faultless, according to the best rules of Aristotle, many voices will be raised to declare their dissent and protest that they *also* have truth on their side. In this painful position the forlorn logician, exhausted at last and weary of war, gives up finally too arduous a struggle, and says : "This is my opinion, and I think I am right." He may be, but in fact he cowardly surrenders to the *opinions* of others the imprescriptible rights of truth. By merely saying that it is his opinion, he shows that he is not so fully persuaded of it as at first he appeared to be. He falters by advocating feebly what is to be maintained against all comers.

That this is the invariable result of the fight for truth, undertaken by all the philosophers of our day who have not preserved their faith, is clear to any one who has read their books, even when the cause they advocate is unassailable. A Christian cannot show such a craven spirit as this. The Church has taught him to believe in a strict infallibility, when it is question of faith. The Word of God is infinitely superior to the opinions of men. He would die for the sake of truth, and can never be brought to admit that the opinions of adversaries are equal to his. He is thus saved from skepticism, toward which all mere philosophers of our age are necessarily drifting, and when the voice of reason speaks unequivocally, he believes it the same as if it was an article of his creed. In him holy faith has truly given back to his mind the mastery which otherwise he might have considered as good as lost. And this in the end is the true reason why the philosophy of the Christian schools is always so

much more positive and unequivocal than that of unchristian philosophers.

This admirable prerogative of the Christian Church ought to make it dear to all true lovers of human reason. For there is no denying that the want of a firm belief in anything, natural as well as supernatural, is the bane of our age. When men have not inwardly the conviction of anything, when on every possible subject they find sufficient cause to hesitate what view they should take of it, when they find it impossible to group themselves in any considerable number around any of the most respectable—and formerly, respected—axioms of the moral, social, and religious order, it may be said that human society is at an end, and is, in fact, decomposed in its primitive element, the individual. It is a poor shift to say that “they will agree to disagree ;” for this expression itself indicates that there is no agreement at all ; and men may as well go to live in forests and deserts, since the tongue, which is the necessary instrument of communication between their minds, cannot convey from one to the other any ideas about which they can agree.

In the third place, nothing on earth can be conceived comparable to the Christian Church, since in her alone dwells rest and peace, because she reposes on the firm anchor of hope. This last prerogative will detain the reader but a few moments. Everybody understands sufficiently well that in this age there is universal unrest, and peace is nowhere. If men are constantly carried away by a whirlwind of contending passions, which curse their life with an empty and unprofitable agitation, the chief cause of it is that they have renounced all Christian hope of a hereafter. Oh, how sweet is the conviction that all is not ended with this world, that death is only a passage to our true life, and that as the babe coming out of the womb of its mother would be transported with joy if it could then appreciate the beauty of this universe, so the human soul, relieved of its dross and purified by the blood of the Redeemer, is destined to a far superior ecstasy of delight at the sight of the eternal country prepared for it by its Creator ! How happy men were when this firm hope was in the heart of all ! The poorest were then often the happiest, having the assurance given by St. Paul : “that which is at present momentary and light in our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.” But all this is gone for a great number of people who still call themselves Christians. They wish to be satisfied with this wretched world, and do not want to

think of another. But their soul is greater than their selfish views, and thus they are tossed to and fro, unable to find a single instant of sweet repose.

The Church teaches the Christian to believe in heaven. She insists as much on it as at any time in former ages. The more a part of those who were formerly her children refuse to lay claim to it, and cling to this earth alone, the more she entreats them not to forget the birthright she secured to them when they received baptism from her. Were she listened to, how different the world would be! The painful excitement which drives almost all men to folly in their vain schemes of earthly happiness would cease, in great part at least, and the consciousness of having an eternity of enjoyment in prospect, if faithful to the observance of the laws of God, would permit the sweet waters of peace to drop in their hearts, and give them, even on this earth, the repose they need and cannot find.

All these bright gifts which the Church offers to her children, namely, a transcendental virtue, an unshakable firmness of reason, a soothing and peaceful hope, are but the exterior attractions of the Bride of Christ. By them alone and abstractedly from her intrinsic worth, her beauty would appear exquisite to the eyes of men should they reflect seriously on it. By them alone likewise her strength is unconquerable, and in spite of many defections, she always will, on account of them, find armies of devoted supporters among those who reflect and think. By themselves they are sufficient to prove that she came down from heaven and rests on the bosom of God, whilst she seems to be only traveling as a pilgrim on earth.

But it is not only the treasures she brings with her that make her attractive, and worthy of all human love. What she is in herself is infinitely above what she carries in her hands. Look at her as undoubtedly born in heaven on the day of creation, when, together with the natural order, another of a far superior kind was established between God and his rational creatures. God was not to be for them only the author of nature, but also the author of grace. Mankind was to be lifted up midway to heaven, if we may say so, and elevated on a plane far above the rest of creation. We feel instinctively this dignity, consequent upon the promise of redemption. Then the Church was appointed to be the distributor of those heavenly graces. Through her God would pour blessings upon us, and we should be able to raise our eyes and our hands to heaven. In this sublime position on the first day of creation, how could she fail to be resplen-

dent with beauty in the eyes of all the choirs of angels ? Later on, see her dwelling among men, as soon as God designed to send them a Redeemer. Her comeliness at that epoch is even now reflected on us by the remembrance of those primitive times, when patriarchs enjoyed the sweetest communion with their Creator. Contemplate her untiring activity to keep then among men the precious boon of a first revelation, and to ward off for hundreds of years the fatal coming on of a debased idolatry. Admire afterward, how, in the simple ark of the covenant, under the folds of the tabernacle, carried by the sons of Jacob in the wilderness, she placed the tables of the Law, not destined for the children of Abraham alone, but for all those of Adam. For she never lost sight of the everlasting duty imposed upon her, to bring back the wanderers to the path of rectitude. How untiring has she not been in her efforts to save the men given to her charge ? It is of her even more than of the apostles of Christ that the prophet has said : “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of her that bringeth good tidings, that preacheth peace . . . and salvation !” Finally, look at her when she bursts out in all her splendor, as soon as Christ gave her a new birth on his Cross, and espoused her on his bed of agony. Is she not truly on all those occasions the daughter of the Almighty, the Bride of the Saviour, the Mother of men ? See her face beaming with divine rays of light, to drive away all darkness ; hear her harmonious voice when proclaiming that she is now a queen, or rather, “the Mother of beautiful Love”—*Ego mater pulchra dilectionis*. Throw yourself in her arms, outstretched to embrace the whole earth. See with admiration her fair feet, after having rested on the clouds of the firmament, stepping down on earth to bless it, and turn its brambles into a garden of roses.

It is of this heavenly Being that we purpose in this book to describe the universal sway. It was to be such an important event in human history that it took several thousand years to announce and prepare it. God himself pronounced the first word at the very moment that His justice compelled Him to drive our first parents away from Paradise. Henceforth Mercy would be stronger than Justice, and embracing her in a firm grasp would hold her hands powerless to strike and punish. “Mercy and Truth met each other, Justice and Peace have embraced one another.” Look at the multitude of prophets who were sent to proclaim it. In their exulting strains of hope and triumph, there is not a single merciful characteristic of

the future Church which is not fully described. But more than any thing else her universality in time and space is dwelt upon and foretold in tones of the greatest majesty and splendor. At the welcome sound of those oft-repeated promises, mankind began to hope and turn their eyes toward heaven. As it was not for the Jews alone that those mysteries were unveiled, but for all nations and races of men, all heard of them more or less, and all revived under the sweet excitement of a holy expectation. The cry of Isaias :\* “O that thou wouldest rend the heavens, and wouldest come down !” was repeated by millions of human beings who were not, however, destined to witness its realization on earth. All felt, nevertheless, that since the ardent desire of it was contained in the souls of all, the day would come when the ancient wounds of our race would be healed, the protracted disunion introduced originally among the children of Adam would cease, and at last mankind would be invited again to form one family.

This is a very faint and inadequate sketch of the relations both of the Church to man and of man to the Church, of her mission, her heavenly beauty, and her earthly attractiveness. How is it that she has become for many in our age an object of distrust, if not of contempt ? We could say with the Gospel :† “An enemy hath done this.” We prefer to say here—men have looked at her under the effect of a distorted vision. But this is not the place to enlarge on this thought. The whole book will prove it by merely narrating the first outburst of the Church’s zeal.

Her expansion took place instantaneously, as soon as the apostles began to preach. Thenceforth her universal sway on earth began, never to end until the last day, when she will be transferred to heaven. The whole world at the time was comprised in the three old continents. It is doubtful if there were already on this Western hemisphere any of the nations which were found in it when it was discovered by Europeans at the end of the fifteenth century. There may have been a few human beings wandering at large in those immense forests and plains of North and South America. All that has been traced by discoverers, explorers, and antiquaries, can be supposed to have found its way into those interminable solitudes since the beginning of our era. The most ancient monuments that have been examined and described do not necessitate a higher date than

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\* LXIV. 1.

† Matt. xiii. 28.

this. The Church, therefore, became at once universal if she filled the greatest part of the Old World, and subdued the chief nations that inhabited it. It can be proved at this time that her conquests in Asia went much further than was for a long time believed, and that she was rapidly spreading toward the eastern ocean when Moslem fanaticism arrested her in her career. A like result follows an attentive study of her early progress in the interior of Africa. Of Europe all concede that she rapidly obtained the leadership, and that she was afterward mainly instrumental in giving birth to European civilization.

But what renders more attractive the detail of all these considerations is the enumeration of the obstacles she had to surmount in so arduous a task as this. The main one was not only the natural opposition between the leanings of corrupt human nature and the doctrines of the Gospel, but in particular the extreme dissimilarities existing between the various races of man—dissimilarities in aptitudes, in thoughts and ideas, in language and manners, but especially in religion and worship. For the Gospel of Christ was preached not only at a time of a high civilization, but also of great corruption and religious disintegration. The primitive traditions of mankind were then nearly all forgotten; the pure religion and morality which existed at first had given place to the most degrading polytheism; and, worse yet, this polytheism had lost all the homogeneity it may have possessed formerly in many countries, and had become a mere jumble of absurd superstitions.

This is, in a few words, the portraiture of humanity which met the apostles at every step, and which must be examined in detail to understand the difficulty of their task. And it would be wrong to believe that polytheism, precisely on account of its disintegration, was giving way when Christianity met it face to face. Its hold upon men was as strong as ever. The civilization of Greece and Rome, the rationalism and philosophy of the Hellenes, the patriotism and high degree of intellect of the Romans, instead of weakening idolatry, which seems to us so absurd, had, on the contrary, rendered the delusion more persistent by connecting it in Greece with all that was valuable among them—art, national life, and literature. In Rome it had become the support of their policy, the pretended warranty of the stability of the State, and the main prop of the dream that promised them an eternal sway. In the Orient, in Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Anterior or Western Asia, and farther East, the

innumerable systems of polytheism that had ruled over these regions during so many ages, were yet as alluring to those nations as ever. Nay, more, they saw at that very time their superstitions adopted by the most refined nations of the West. Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, had openly adopted the gods of Egypt, of Syria, of Babylonia itself.

Yet as soon as the Church appeared in the midst of all those deluded people, she found willing ears to listen to her, and soon she counted children among the most credulous of them. And what is positively incredible, humanly speaking, in a few hundred years idolatry had disappeared in the greatest part of Europe and Asia, and in a good portion of Africa. Few men reflect seriously on this most strange and remarkable fact. In Mesopotamia, for instance, the infamous worship of Mylitta and Belus, which had prevailed from the earliest Chaldean Empire, from the time of Nimrod, in fact, down to the dominion of the Romans, melted away, no one knows how, as soon as Christ was preached in Babylonia, probably in the apostolic age. We perceive the same fact taking place in Syria with regard to the degrading rites of Astarte, Melcarte, all the Sun-gods, and fish-gods, and unnamed gods of every description. The same in Cappadocia and Pontus with respect to Ma and other goddesses, although their temples were still surrounded and filled with thousands each of *ἱεροδούλοι* ruled by powerful high priests. The same again in Phrygia, where Cybele received the disgraceful homage of her votaries. The same in Egypt and Nubia, where the wonderful change took larger proportions perhaps than anywhere else. The enumeration, to be adequate, would have to embrace all the nations of the East and North and South, without forgetting the West, teeming, as it was, with the superstitions of Hellas and of Rome, and of the barbarous Northwest. All this festering mass of corruption and error, to which hundreds of millions of people had been addicted from the earliest ages, went down with a crash, as it were, and vanished mysteriously; so that it is impossible to assign any precise epoch to the disappearance of each of them in any particular place. If in a few spots we have some data to judge of it, and it is found that those relics of the former barbarism lingered longer in the land, it is precisely where we should least expect it that a greater attachment to polytheism is thus remarked. It was, for instance, in Rome and Alexandria that the former gods enjoyed longer the veneration of the people. This was probably managed by the providence of God, to show that reason and logic and the spread of universal intel-

ligence, as they say, had very little, if anything, to do with the ruin of idolatry ; since it was precisely in countries where there was more thinking and reasoning and knowledge that this strange anomaly took place.

But the reader cannot expect so early as this to be powerfully impressed by this mighty event. It will be only when a much greater number of details can be given that the conclusion will be irresistible. It is the main object of these volumes to furnish those details. It is most important to do so in the present age, because many men have come to imagine that the establishment of Christianity was altogether a natural affair. Some modern writers speak on the subject as if they thought that they would have succeeded in doing it as well as the apostles of Christ, had they undertaken the task with only their ability, without any more need of the help of Heaven than is supposed in the celebrated French proverb, *Aide-toi, le Ciel t'aidera*. To do away with this delusion this work has been mainly written.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

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	PAGE
PREFACE.....	v

### CHAPTER I.

CATHOLICITY PREPARED BY THE PATRIARCHAL AND MOSAIC DISPENSATIONS .....	1
1. A glance at the present attitude of the Catholic Church.....	2
2. The Patriarchal Religion the first adumbration of future Catholicity.....	10
3. The Mosaic Dispensation did not suppose the exclusion of the Gentiles .....	18
4. The Mosaic Law was a middle step between the Patriarchal Religion and Christianity—Its analogy with Catholicity.....	24
5. Inner spirit of Jews and Christians.....	37
6. The Jews were united to the Gentiles by the bonds of love.....	47

### CHAPTER II.

THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH ANNOUNCED AND PREPARED BY THE INSPIRED WRITERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.....	53
1. Two distinct characters in the Books of the Old Law.....	53
2. The first prophecies from Abraham down to Moses.....	54
3. The prophecy of Balaam.....	57
4. The prophecy of Tobias.....	63
5. A few words on the prophetic spirit.....	67
6. The prophecies of David.....	73
7. A few words on ethnology.....	93
8. The prophecies of Isaias on various nations.....	95
9. The prophecies of Isaias concerning the future conversion of nations.....	112
10. Universality of this process of conversion.....	118
11. A word on Daniel's prophecies.....	129

## CHAPTER III.

	PAGE
A FEW WORDS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ON THE SAME SUBJECT—CHARACTER OF THE APOSTLES' MISSION AND ENTERPRISE.....	182
1. Character of Christ, and his allusions to previous prophecies.....	182
2. Character of the Apostles' Mission and Enterprise.....	147

## CHAPTER IV.

THE GENTILE WORLD CONFRONTING THE INFANT CHURCH.....	162
1. Nations of Syria and Chaldea.....	162
2. Nations of Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia.....	177
3. Nations of Persia and Armenia.....	184
4. Hindostan and the Far Orient.....	188
5. The Greek-speaking World.....	192
6. Nations north and south, not mentioned so far.....	208
7. Nations of the Western Roman World.....	205
8. Conclusions from the whole chapter.....	216

## CHAPTER V.

JERUSALEM A STARTING-POINT, NOT A CENTER — PALESTINE, SYRIA, AND CHALDEA THE FIRST CONQUESTS OF CHRISTIANITY.....	239
1. Church of Jerusalem—"Petrine and Pauline parties.".....	239
2. On criticism in general, and German and English criticism in particular.....	254
3. Origin and spread of Christianity in Palestine.....	272
4. Of the first Greek Christians in Palestine and Syria.....	287
5. Origin of Christianity in Syria and Northern Mesopotamia.....	291
6. Early spread of Christianity in Chaldea.....	299
7. Origin of Christianity in Cappadocia and Pontus.....	313

## CHAPTER VI.

EARLY SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA—ORIGIN OF MONASTICISM IN EGYPT—ITS INSTITUTIONS VINDICATED.....	316
1. A short description of Egypt in the first century.....	320
2. Origin of Christianity in Egypt.....	324
3. Origin of Egyptian monasticism.....	338
4. A short vindication of monasticism.....	348
5. Primitive ascetic life in Hindostan, and origin of Buddhist monasteries.....	367
6. Rapid conversion of Egypt.....	385

## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

xxi

### CHAPTER VII.

	PAGE
SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN NUBIA AND ETHIOPIA—CHRISTIAN MONUMENTS IN NUBIA AND THE ETHIOPIA OF MEROË—ORIGIN OF THE RELIGION OF CHRIST IN THE ETHIOPIA OF AXUM.....	395
1. A few words on the ancient Ethiopians.....	395
2. Origin of Christianity in Nubia.....	397
3. Conclusions drawn from monuments and inscriptions in Nubia... 407	
4. How far the old prophecies have been accomplished by all these events.....	421
5. The Ethiopia of Axum.....	426
6. History of Frumentius or Salama.....	431
7. Early history of the Ethiopian Church after Frumentius.....	436

### CHAPTER VIII.

EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN ARABIA—IN THE NORTH AMONG SEVERAL IMPORTANT TRIBES TRANSPLANTED FROM THE SOUTH—IN THE SOUTH PARTICULARLY—AMONG THE ARABES SCENITAE, OR BEDOUINS IN THE DESERT.....	456
1. General description of Arabia.....	456
2. Early Christianity among the Arabs of the Himyar country or Arabia Felix.....	459
3. Origin of Christianity in Northern Arabia.....	473
4. The same among the Arabes Scenite—St. Simeon Stylites.....	480
5. The Christianity of Arabia was the same as that of Rome and Greece.....	488



THE  
CHURCH AND THE GENTILE WORLD.

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CHAPTER I.

CATHOLICITY PREPARED BY THE PATRIARCHAL AND MOSAIC DISPENSATIONS.

AT all times the Church has confronted the nations. They were all given her as an “inheritance,” and addressing them in the name of Heaven she has spoken words of authority and motherly kindness: of authority, because of her being “the Daughter of the Great King;” of kindness, as the true heavenly “Mother” of men. Nothing on earth can be compared to her influence. She does not belong to a State, to a nation, to a particular race. She clasps them all in her loving embrace; and whatever may be their inclination toward her, she calls them her children; and all States, all nations, all races have to come in contact with her, whether they will or not. This is after all the great character of her Catholicity.

That she is as ancient as the world is the common doctrine of the Fathers. Yet it is said with justice that she was born of the Saviour on the cross, because her previous existence was but an adumbration and figure of her future reality. Her subsequent growth, moreover, was in truth prepared by the typical forms she assumed under the law of nature and that of Moses. This is the main object of this chapter, which will be, however, chiefly confined to the great feature of her universality.

When she was born out of the side of Christ opened purposely on Calvary; when she came out a pure virgin, bathed in the water and the blood that the beloved disciple saw gushing forth from the very heart of the Redeemer, she appeared like a new Eve, created from the flesh of the true Adam, to be one with Him, so that he might also exclaim: “Thou art bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh;

I shall cleave to thee as to a bride, and we shall be two in one flesh." \* This can be said of the Son of God and of regenerated mankind —*Ecclesia Christi*—destined to be forever united with him in the bonds of love.

This was the mystic body formed at that very moment, and then composed of the apostles almost alone, to whom their Master had said the day before : " Remain in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you the branches. . . . You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have appointed you, that you should go and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain. If the world hate you, know ye that it hated me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own ; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." †

These few utterances of our Lord suffice to explain his ardent love for the Church so clearly identified with himself ; and also the whole life of the Church to the very end, and the opposition she has to expect from the world, although destined at last to conquer it.

At all times this has been more or less the case ; and at all times likewise the Church has found in her spiritual conquests ardent friends ready to die for her, and more firmly attached to her interests than to their own. Strange spectacle indeed ! the most remarkable in all human history ; the most attractive even to the unbeliever, provided he has a mind and a heart. But it is after all only the realization of the words of Christ to his apostles—namely, " He had appointed them to bring forth fruit, and their fruit should remain." In our days the phenomenon presents peculiarities of its own which deserve a particular attention. The Church is " of the world " perhaps less than ever ; yet her claims on the world are as great as they ever were ; and in spite of the efforts of many nations to get out of her grasp, she keeps it on as firmly as in the best time of her greatness. This is in fact the true question of the day ; and a few preliminary words on the subject will not be found out of place.

### 1. *A glance at the present attitude of the Catholic Church.*

There was a time when the nations belonged to her by faith. All ranks in society gloried then in the title of Christian. Then it

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\* Gen. ii.

† John, ch. xv. *passim*.

might be said to a certain extent that "she was of the world," and the world, at least in Europe, gladly bowed down to her. But she seems now to have nearly returned to the state of her first days, except that she keeps her conquests by dint of the most heroic efforts; and the words of the Saviour to his apostles as related by St. John and quoted above apply to her almost absolutely. What attitude does she assume in this altered situation? Does she lose courage and give up in despair? No, no! Both toward those who have never yet rejected her in spite of their seeming indifference, and toward those who, having openly separated themselves from her, appear unable to find the repose they need, and the faith and hope the heart of man absolutely requires, she stands in the face of these Catholic and Protestant nations, in as bold a posture, with as uncompromising a doctrine, as in the days of her absolute sway over minds and hearts. This astounding immutability of the bride of Christ may shock a number of men who cannot understand it, but those who reflect on it seriously cannot but be struck by the surprising spectacle it offers. Millions and millions of people under the leadership of a few men comparatively, armed only with their sacred character and their determination of purpose, all professing a well-defined belief, acknowledging a strict moral code, and claiming the world as their own, deserve to attract the attention of friends and foes, and require an explanation for those who do not belong to this universally spread and closely knit society.

With respect first to the so-called Catholic nations, as they profess still to respect the Chair of Peter, receive their hierarchy from the successor of the Galilean fisherman, and the churches of the great majority among them are devoted to the true Roman, Catholic, Apostolic worship, the Pope feels himself a father, the Church feels herself yet a mother. They both speak with authority, as becomes the interpreters of God's truth and will. They warn these wayward children of the danger of listening to other teachers to whom the world has not been given; they point out to them the abyss into which they would surely be plunged, should they break entirely from supernatural control. Every word that comes now from the Vatican, all the solemn voices uttered by the solid Catholic Hierarchy, partake of this fatherly warning and authoritative direction. It is surely a solemn moment, in the rapid progress of time, we have finally come to. It looks as if the former conversion of our ancestors was again to be brought in question; as if the immense benefits con-

ferred on the world by the Christian religion—that is, by the Catholic Church—were to be repudiated under the plea that something far better can be found, answering more satisfactorily to the aspirations of human nature. How many attempts at theories for the well-being of modern nations have we not heard of in the short space of our life ! How many are not every day brought forward as worthy the attention of mankind, and sure to bring happiness in their train ! And the best of them after a short period of excitement and infatuation finally turn out to be—what they ought to have been from the first day—ridiculous failures. And all this happens in the bosom of nations seemingly Catholic ; all this is the fruit of the mental labor of men who received their baptism from the Mother-Church, whose names were registered in her records, whose marriage vows were pronounced at the foot of her altars, whose last wish is to be buried with her prayers, and who form a portion of her universality !

How was all this brought about ? In the language of the Gospel, pure wheat having been sowed, how did it happen that tares grew up ? The answer is given directly in the sacred book : “ An enemy hath done it.” We would have to unravel the whole web of Christian history to account for the lamentable fact. We must simply admit it, and see how in consequence of it the Church in our days stands in the midst of her children as if she was in the midst of strangers—sometimes of enemies—facing the world in fact ; that world “ of which ” she is not, according to the Gospel, and “ for which ” Christ did not pray. It looks as if her Catholicity was on the wane.

We have seemingly given to the phenomenon an unlimited extension, as if all Catholics were included in the category, but such was not certainly our intention. We are not blind to the hopeful fact that even in our days an immense number of men have not “ bent their knee to Baal ; ” that there is in all countries a solid army of devoted Christians, either born in the Church and educated by her with the utmost care, or who came to her embrace in spite of the prejudices of their education, and are now devotedly attached to her. Their number even increases day by day, so that we are no more in a state of decline, but rather of progress and advance, and hope consequently is more in keeping with the actual state of things than despondency. The real universality of the Church is sure to come out of this more compact than ever.

The general outlook, however, is yet, as just stated, chiefly owing to this, that nearly all governments have lately openly renounced their allegiance to the Church, and declared themselves independent of even her moral control ; so that there seems to be, at the present moment, scarcely any “Catholic Power” in existence. The words of the Divine Saviour to his apostles, which, when uttered, represented those twelve men, unarmed and defenseless, as opposed by the world and to the world, which they were sent to conquer, are therefore almost as true in our days, with respect to the rulers of the nations, as they were at the time our Lord spoke ; and it is that correlative attitude of both which must fix itself deeply in our minds at the beginning of these reflections.

With respect to heretical and schismatical nations the position taken by the Church partakes at the same time of boldness and simplicity ; yet appears as firm and uncompromising as becomes the true teacher and civilizer. There is with regard to them no hesitation in her speech, no concealment in her claims. Those nations know very well who she is and what she wants ; and although they are yet in dread of her, most of them have to allow her to come and sit down quietly where they refused previously to permit her to appear. And she sits among them as a mild queen, calling the deluded people “her erring children ;” and she opens her arms and bids them come to her bosom, because she alone has the words of eternal life, and even the promises of this world. Who can say that this is not true of England, and Scotland, and Germany, and Holland, and Protestant Switzerland ? Who can pretend that this may not be shortly true of Russia, and Greece, and the Danubian Provinces, and many other Eastern countries ? Thus does she assert toward them her universality, her solid claims to it.

It is proper to consider a moment attentively the mighty difference with respect to the position of the Church in all these countries, between the present moment and that—we may say—of yesterday. In many of them, a few years back, her presence was not only illegal, but criminal. It was highly criminal to build a Catholic church, to open a Catholic house of education, to found a Catholic hospital or asylum ; nay, much more than highly criminal ; it was almost absolutely impossible. The man who would have dared to appear in the proscribed territory, as a priest of the Mother Church, was by that very act guilty of high treason. The same would have been the fate of a man announcing himself as a Catholic schoolmas-

ter and teacher of the Catholic catechism, although not in orders and a simple lay citizen. No book, picture, object of art, or token of simple devotion with the stamp of Catholicity, was allowed not only to circulate, but to be deposited in the most interior part of any house. The cottage of the peasant, and the rich mansion of the nobleman, when suspected of harboring such "superstitious objects," were liable to be ransacked from garret to cellar; and on some occasions the fury of the mob destroyed edifices in which had been found only that prominent token of *superstition*—the crucifix—yes, the image of the Redeemer on the cross!

There is no need of rehearsing what is sufficiently known; all the details of a persecution lasting three hundred years. The Catholic name appeared so effectually blotted out from those countries, that in some of them, as generally in the three Scandinavian States of the north, when the storm finally abated, not a single Catholic family was known to exist. In the whole north of Europe, not only the daily sacrifice foreshadowed by Malachi had ceased to be celebrated, but the sublime powers transmitted by Christ to his apostles were absolutely disused, nay, forbidden to the people; no one could be absolved from his sins by a minister of God duly appointed; no one could partake of the "flesh and blood" of his Saviour from a hand which "being consecrated could consecrate." It was indeed the "abomination of desolation"! Yet such countries called themselves Christian. That part of the *world* was positively forbidden ground for the Church to which the Saviour had given *the world* to conquer.

How is it that whilst Catholic Powers—as they are called—have lately made within their territories the position of the Church so much worse than it was formerly, Protestant Powers—so called—have of their own accord abolished nearly all the previous disabilities created by law as against the Church?—there is only to except a single country where a sudden storm is now raging. They say it is owing to the principles of universal religious toleration which have finally gained ground everywhere. We can scarcely believe in the real existence of such principles as these of toleration, since new fetters are attempted to be forged nearly every day, chiefly in former Catholic countries, to enslave the Church; as if the handmaiden of God, made forever free by him, and destined to make all men truly free, could be enslaved, coerced, and forced to change what for her is unchangeable, namely, Truth and Morals. We prefer to ascribe

this visible amelioration in Protestant countries to the loving providence of God ; but the change for the better is too plain not to be acknowledged at once. Where formerly there was a wilderness, the garden of roses is again blooming ; where a few years back no altar was raised on which Christ could daily come to bless the country by his divine presence, the perpetual sacrifice is again celebrated in open day and to the knowledge of all. And the Common Mother of all men is there ready to receive those erring children who so long refused to come to her embrace. The political power of nearly all those heretical and schismatical countries has of itself let down the barriers which hindered the true messengers of God from delivering their injunction and acquitting themselves of their charge. The rulers of these regions are no more bold, defiant, armed with the persecuting scourge ; they look askant certainly, yet they allow almost completely the Church to have her own way. They do not oppose any more obstacles to the building of God's temples, to the opening of houses of education, of houses of refuge for the young, the aged, the infirm, and the poor. Every one can openly profess himself to be a member of the formerly oppressed religious creed ; and there is not too great an outcry raised abroad when a man of a high station in the world embraces the cross and declares himself a disciple of the Crucified, and a son of the true mother.

To be sure, in both camps—Catholic and Protestant nominally—the apparent rulers of the world have taken an unmistakable stand against the right. They wish to guide themselves the destinies of the nations, without interference, as they say ; without the help of Heaven, as we affirm. They proclaim the total separation of human power from God, of morality from religion, of law from either, of time from eternity. This is the grand apostasy of our days, against which all sincere Christians must raise their voice. For if the doctrine is allowed to take root, if the delusion becomes a political or social axiom, if a public opinion of the kind is established in modern society, atheism shall be, by the fact, introduced in the fundamental laws of nations, and ages of contention and strife shall be the consequence. In antiquity, in the midst of the absurd delusions of polytheism, at least the principle was admitted by all civilized States, that originally the foundation of society had been laid down by Heaven itself, that God had presided at the birth of peoples and tribes, that there must be eternal principles of law at the bottom of all legislation, and that Heaven is to be invoked for the protection of

the State, and consulted for the best means of securing it. The modern pretended lawgiver and statesman denies openly all these axioms of ancient wisdom, and substitutes human for divine power, unsupported and unaided reason for heavenly guidance, and the brute will of the State for the loving one of the Eternal Father. This is, in fact, the question as raised against the Church ; and this alone would establish firmly her divine claims. To reject her, God must be rejected ; to renounce her control, that of Heaven has to be laid aside ; and to aim at complete independence from her, absolute separation from God himself must be decreed.

Fortunately the nations are not yet altogether committed to the aberrations of their political leaders. They can reject with scorn those insolent claims ; and they will infallibly do so, if they perceive the necessary consequence of the new principles, namely, the complete and undisguised despotism of the State, freed from the control of any other superior power.

But the Church, as Catholic, has received from the Saviour a universal mission, and Protestant, schismatic, and Catholic nations are not the only ones comprised in it. There is, besides, the far larger field of infidelity and barbarism ; and it is good to give a momentary look at it, and consider an instant the attitude of the Church toward it. This must positively secure her claims, as it proves so clearly her divine character.

The Church has never been unfaithful to her trust in that regard ; the following pages shall abundantly prove it. From the beginning holy zeal for the conversion of the heathen has been a burning fire in her bosom ; and without a single exception—Russia herself included—all the nations which now profess to be Christian have received from her the Gospel. This was so from the beginning, and throughout the ages that followed. But at the end of the fifteenth century, when the full discovery of both East and West startled at once Europe, she seemed to become young again, and her missionaries undertook directly the Christianization of more than half of the globe. Had she not been brutally interfered with by Protestantism, at this moment, no doubt, the idolatry of Hindostan, the Buddhism of China and Japan, the fetichism of America, would have almost altogether disappeared, and the cross of Christ would be the religious emblem of the whole universe. The Protestant States at first, particularly England and the Low Countries, without sending a single one of their zealots to preach the harsh doctrines of early Calvinism,

employed the sword, and the fire, and the waters of the ocean to destroy the messengers of Christ, and put a stop to their success in those immense regions. We all know what the Dutch did, particularly in Japan, where certainly, at their instigation, the frightful persecution began which, at the price of torrents of Christian blood, effectually blotted out the doctrines of the Gospel from that devoted land. Many other examples might be adduced. This state of affairs lasted two full centuries, yet did not damp the apostolic ardor of the Universal Church.

When at last the persecution had well nigh died out in Europe, it seemed that it was going to expire likewise in the Far Orient ; but bloody edicts had, at least in many places in the East, acquired a kind of right of prescription, and Catholic native or foreign blood has continued to be poured at regular intervals, even in our days, when no part of Europe can any more favor such barbarities. Soon, however, wherever the possibility remained of increasing the number of Christians and extending the mild sway of the Church, a new spectacle presented itself. The Protestant nations, which had not yet appeared to know that there was in those distant regions a field for apostolic zeal, became directly inflamed with a new ardor, and found in their midst apostles of a new kind. Their object was said to be to spread the reign of Christ ; but it looked in truth as if their chief intention was to thwart everywhere the efforts of the true missionaries of God, and wrench from their grasp the fruit of their labor, annoyed at seeing each of them surrounded already by simple and firm believers. Thus the true Church has been opposed, yet she has continued to fulfill her divine mission in spite of all obstacles thrown in her way ; and at this moment she more than ever exerts all her efforts to gain to the Saviour those who have not yet turned their eyes toward him, and to make one family of all mankind.

This is the grand spectacle of the Church confronting at this hour the nations, and by this alone proving her claims to real Catholicity. She does it to-day as she did it at the first promulgation of the Gospel. In spite of many hostile prognostications, she is sure of the success she then obtained all over the world. On this account the simple rehearsal of what once took place cannot but be of immense benefit to the modern reader. Faith will become stronger, hope firmer, and the love of Christ and his Church more ardent. It is a real demonstration of the divine character of Christ's bride, without entering into the consideration of her intrinsic life, but limiting the

study of it to external phenomena. Her mission, clearly announced long beforehand, is proved by her sudden ubiquity, her persevering claims on all races, and her effective influence on them all as soon as she comes in contact with them. Thus is she Catholic in truth, in spite of the refusal of many to submit to her. And from afar we may salute the day when opposition shall, if not cease, at least become weaker, and allow her organization to embrace all countries, and her voice consequently to be heard and obeyed by millions who have not yet had the chance of it.

## 2. *The Patriarchal Religion, the first adumbration of future Catholicity.*

We saw the definite birth of the Church on the cross, as that of a new Eve from the side of a new Adam. Had she never appeared before to the eyes of angels and men? St. Paul has said: "Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day, and forever." His bride must claim an equal antiquity, and we must look at her, in this first chapter, as she was before he gave her a definite form and beauty, to last until the end of time. When was she really born, and what rule and authority did she first obtain among the nations?

Those men misunderstand her completely who pretend that she has been, and she is yet, good enough for some particular races of man, that of Europeans, for instance, over whom she for many centuries held her sway; but that there are many families of nations that have invariably refused to receive her as their queen, and will never submit to her claims. Thus they speak to make her appear local and circumscribed, and consequently far from divine. We, on the contrary, think that at her first birth even "she received the nations as her inheritance," and her Catholicity was the rule, even primitively, all over the globe.

For all Christians there can be no difficulty here. Indeed, if we believe that man, created at first in a high and holy state, fell through disobedience, and lost the friendship, the sonship of God; if we thankfully recognize that, owing to his infinite mercy, and perhaps also through pity for man who had not sinned unprovoked, but at the suggestion of the tempter, God did for humanity what he had refused to fallen angelic nature, and promised to mankind a Redeemer, in the very act of sending our first parents in exile from paradise, we must admit that a religion—from *religare*—was thus proclaimed for

the whole human race, one from the beginning and universal in time and place, catholic consequently as we understand it, and claiming from the origin the undivided allegiance of all men. Those who unfortunately are not Christians will see at least, we hope, that such was the fact, as far as the records of antiquity can warrant.

But there is something more. Since that religion, revealed to humanity from the beginning, was to be in the fullness of time taught and explained by the Son of God himself, we cannot even suppose the least contradiction and inconsistency in its tenets. So that what primitive men believed, we must believe in our days; the only difference being that the full light of the Gospel illuminating fully what was left at first dim and obscure, and the state of manhood to which mankind has arrived requiring more than the state of infancy of the primeval ages; promises, figures, types, adumbrations, were to be used as forerunners of the reality. A few truths, in fact, including by implication all the others, added to a number of consoling myths, to keep up their courage, were sufficient for the spiritual enlightenment and salvation of our ancestors, whilst a much fuller development of those original truths was demanded by the needs of a more advanced humanity. The first men could not have understood what is plain to Christians, chiefly since the full belief of Christianity is the consequence of a great number of divine-human facts, known to us, unknown to them. It sufficed them to receive the nut with the shell yet unbroken; we have the kernel, and know the rich aliment it contains.

But, is this really a fact? and could that primitive religion of which we speak constitute a Church in full communion with our own, so that the sacrifice of Abel can be identified with the one we witness every day on our altars? Undoubtedly. The religious rites performed by Abel, Enoch, Noah, Melchisedec, Job, Abraham, Jacob, Aaron, etc., were the same with our Christian rites, except that the former ones honored God in view of a future Redeemer, whilst we thank him for his coming. Thus have expressed themselves all the Fathers of the Church who have spoken on the subject. We will refer only to St. Augustine and St. Gregory, who would suffice by themselves, and to Eusebius of Cæsarea, who makes it a starting-point in his history of the Church.\*

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\* Vide St. Aug. In Psal. 128<sup>o</sup>—Sermone 4<sup>o</sup> de Jacob et Esau, alias 44<sup>o</sup>—Epist. ad Dardanum 187<sup>o</sup>, alias 57<sup>o</sup> n. 84—Tractatu 45<sup>o</sup> in Joannem—Vide Gregorium magnum homilia 19<sup>o</sup> in Evang.—Euseb. Cæsar. Lib. 1<sup>o</sup> Hist. cap. 4<sup>o</sup>.

The Fathers of the Church merely followed St. Paul himself in his Epistle to the Hebrews,\* in which he shows that the faith of Abel, Enoch, and Noah was the same as that of Abraham, Jacob, Isaac, and Moses, the same as that which he preached himself. Finally we have only to refer to the words used every day by Christian priests in the sacrificial offering of the Universal Victim.† In this beautiful passage of our liturgy mention is made only of patriarchs anterior to Moses, and consequently to the Mosaic religion; and Melchisedec did not belong to the Jewish race founded only by Abraham his contemporary.

Thus in general not only the Fathers, but the Christian authors of posterior ages, consider Abel as the first fruits of the true Church, because first he was put to death in hatred of the accepted sacrifices he offered; and St. Augustine goes even so far as to say that in his time "he alone constituted the Church."

But how can it be said that the patriarchal religion partook really of the character of a Church, when there was in fact no authoritative teacher prior to the Synagogue, and truth was left altogether to the imperfect channel of a merely human tradition? To explain it, we must consider the really divine nature of the revelation transmitted not only orally but by custom and religious rites; and although we do not thus find an organization as strict even as Judaism, much less as perfect as our Catholicity, still we discover in it enough to substantiate the assertion that it was really a Church, and at that time the true Church of God.

L. Ferraris, in his *Bibl. Eccl.*,‡ gives some proof of it, but not altogether satisfactory to a modern reader, because the subject at the time was new, and had not been yet sufficiently studied. He shows indeed by the very testimony of the Fathers we have just mentioned, that the origin of the Church goes as far back as Abel, according to the opinion of St. Gregory the Great and the majority of theologians. But intending as he does to explain the nature of the Church of Christ, understood in a strict sense, and with all the prerogatives and notes belonging to her; he considers it as proper and

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\* Heb. ch. xi.

† "Supra quæ propitio ac sereno vultu respicere digneris; et accepta habere sicut accepta habere dignatus es munera pueri tui justi Abel, et sacrificium Patriarchæ nostri Abrahæ, et quod tibi obtulit summus sacerdos tuus Melchisedech, sanctum sacrificium, immaculatam hostiam."

‡ *Art. de Ecclesia*, final appendix.

appropriate to examine if there was not a peculiar providence of God bestowed on the Church "in the law of nature;" and he finds that "faith and morality"—*qua credenda quæque agenda*—such as was required in order that men might secure their salvation by a right belief and a pure cult—had been then revealed either by God himself taking a visible shape, or by his angels sent as his ministers, or even by men gifted with a true prophetic spirit and the marks of a divine mission. "Thus," he says, "God revealed to men a heavenly—*supernam*—religion, and called them into a society having a right to the name of a Church." Then, going briefly through the narrative of Genesis, he concludes by these words: "*In the law of nature God had established rules for his Church, either himself, or through his ministers, not only by inculcating a proper religious faith, but also by precepts, prohibitions, and institutions having the same end in view.*"

But these few words do not sufficiently show what kind of organization there was in the Church itself. Only the action of God over her by his providence is mentioned; and although this is a great point, and might suffice rigorously speaking; yet in our days something more definite is needed to prove that the Church was then, even, an "organism," endowed with life and propagating itself, though far less perfectly than in subsequent ages, particularly in our own. For it is one of the greatest errors of our days to represent the Christian Church, at all times, as a mere agglomeration of men worshiping God, each in his own way, without any reference to a superior rule, without a real subordination to at least a sufficiently well-defined organization. For a long time Protestantism fought for what it called "the fundamental truths of revelation." All the sects admitting them were supposed to be branches of the same Christian Church, and their adherents, they asserted, could be saved; and on this basis the controversy was mainly carried on. But in our days, the mass of non-Catholics call for a larger, and, in fact, all-embracing circle, in which all men, merely bowing to the exterior name of Christ, can enter, and thus become members of a huge body without real shape and particular aims. In this opinion dogmas are expunged, morality is reduced to mere sentiment, and as all kind of exterior authority has been—long ago—rejected by the sects, between God and man, no spiritual power can be claimed by any man, or any body of men, on earth. All those "exploded notions" of our fathers make room for a "broad" but "misty" Christianity,

destined, they say, to conquer shortly all races and nations under the guidance of the mighty Aryan race.

It can be successfully maintained that at no time did God leave mankind without rule and means of finding out the will of Heaven ; and that not only from the coming of Christ was his Church endowed with prerogatives and authority ; but even at the very origin of mankind, subordination, dogmas, morality, were sufficiently well defined to form a real “city,” as St. Augustine calls the Church even in those early ages, chiefly as opposed to the “city of the world,” already in existence and in antagonism to the first. And to show that the same city existed which has continued ever since, the great bishop of Hippo \* calls attention to the fact that in Genesis † the posterity of the fratricide Cain is not carried farther down than Lamech the murderer, because it was to be altogether destroyed by the universal deluge ; whilst as to Seth, who replaced Abel, the mention of Adam is brought back, and the whole series of the family of the “children of God” is carried down from Enos to Noah ; to be afterward especially placed on record, in a long line of patriarchs, through Abraham to Jacob and his posterity as far as Christ.

Thus Enos—“*iste cœpit invocare nomen Domini*”—becomes the great “son of Seth,” of whom St. Augustine speaks magnificently. †

The public worship of God established by Enos, no doubt under divine direction, was to be one of the great characteristics of that universal Church ; and we know that God is worshiped as much—if not more—by the keeping of his commandments, as by the observance of religious rites established under his direction. There must have been, therefore, even at that early age, a code *credendorum et agendorum* as L. Ferraris calls it, which is sufficient to form a Church, strictly so called ; since our own Holy Religion consists essentially of the same.

In *Gentilism* a short sketch is set forth embracing a few details of this primitive code ; referring it to *dogmas, facts, and rites* ; and it is there pointed out how the chief of them for a long time prevailed universally through all nations, and thus constituted a real “Catholic Church.”

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\* *De Civ. Dei*, xv. 21. † *Cap. iv. et v.*

‡ “*Homo ille unus totius supernæ civitatis est unitas ; nondum quidem completa, sed promissa, ista prophetica præfiguratione complenda.*” And a little further on, he adds : “*Eam quippe societatem hominum præfigurat—Seth—quæ dicit, Ego autem, sicut oliva fructifera in domo Dei speravi, in misericordia Dei.*”

There was not in it, it is true, any central authority, as God established it afterward, to a certain extent in the Synagogue, and in a perfect manner in the Christian Church ; and on this account the purity of the patriarchal religion was kept in the various nations but a short time. Yet, even at that epoch, God provided against that danger by the number of revelations he gave to private patriarchs, who thus obtained an immense personal influence and authority over their particular tribes ; and we must not imagine that all those particular revelations have been mentioned in the Old Testament. The records of many others have certainly perished, as they were not needed to trace down the history of "the people of God," the prominent object of the Old Law. The great "dispensations" through Moses for the Jews, and through Christ for all men, were of a very different character, yet had the same Church for their object. They were more secure, because not intrusted only to tradition, but preserved in revealed writings, and placed under the guardianship of an exterior authority. In the patriarchal religion there was no written word of God, no priestly authority to decide on religious questions. Hence its universality and unity could not last ; it was broken up by pantheism first and polytheism afterward. The priesthood was unconnected and unorganized ; nay more, it was unassisted and deprived of the prerogative of inerrancy.

Yet, for all this, a real, spiritual society existed, bound together by the same traditions, the same dogmas, the same religious rites ; and the "City of God" was already fulfilling its mission of harboring within its walls the first-fruits of mankind, rich even now of the promise of redemption, and embracing all races.

It is most important to see, if but for a moment, that there was a sort of authority as early as this, keeping the nations together, and enabling them to hold on firmly, should they wish it, to the noble truths, both in point of dogmas and of morality, intrusted to them by God himself, through the great men, existing in each particular nation, to whom he revealed his word. For it was a true revelation from Heaven ; the first imparted to mankind ; and its authority was truly divine, although not brilliantly accompanied by such prodigies as were lavished with profusion on the "dispensations" promulgated by Moses and by Christ. After giving a moment to this consideration, it will be easy to understand how the Jewish Church was more strict than that of the patriarchs, and the Christian Church than both.

In the patriarchal period men were not left entirely to their own guidance with regard to belief and conduct. The state of mental and moral anarchy advocated in our days by those who reject all exterior authority with respect to both, and who reduce Christianity to a mere shadow unsupported by any sure doctrine, and firmly sanctioned by no strict moral code, could not exist even during that primitive epoch, when men seem to have enjoyed such an unlimited religious liberty. That liberty was circumscribed by a strict revelation addressed by Heaven to many patriarchs, and conveyed by them to the rest of mankind. These had to believe what was handed down ; and to refuse to accept it was, in fact, as in our own days, to rebel against the authority of Heaven, and to apostatize from "the faith delivered to the Saints."

The peculiar "providence of God" by which alone L. Ferraris explains the permanence of that faith during several centuries, was certainly a factor in the result ; but not the only one. There was, even then, a sort of *Ecclesia docens*, comprising the totality of true patriarchs and priests, who announced openly to their families and tribes what they had heard from God himself, or from the angels, his ministers. And their authority could not be contested, because a lie on their lips, when speaking on such exalted subjects, would have been considered as a sacrilegious supposition, which their whole life contradicted. The constant accord, besides, of these channels of strict revelation was a sure warrant of their high origin. If the array of *dogmas, rites, and facts*, as were briefly described in *Gentilism*, had not come down from a superior source ; if they had been merely the play of the imagination of pretended revelators, or the deep findings of their individual thoughts, they would no more have agreed together than we see in the philosophical or religious opinions of our modern thinkers, who certainly will not themselves boast of unanimity in their utterances. But a universal and surprising agreement formed then of mankind a compact moral whole ; and with justice men considered their patriarchs or seers as the mouth-pieces of Heaven itself, which alone could have originated such a holy accord among them.

It is, therefore, only in our times that men have been found bold enough to announce that the only revelation they believe in is that of the moral consciousness of each individual. Neither during the primitive ages, nor under the Mosaic dispensation, nor even after the introduction of pantheism and idolatry in the ancient world, did

mankind suppose that the only speech of God to us consisted in the inner voice of the individual conscience. Nay more, the sad period of *individualism*, in which terminated everywhere the silly jumble of polytheism, cannot be said to have been a complete illustration of what we see in our days. The vulgar then recognized in their village gods and goddesses so many supernatural beings whom they tried to propitiate ; and the philosophers of the epoch admitted at least the preternatural influence of their *fatum*, or of the voice of their oracles and dreams. At this time everything which is not natural and earthly is pronounced by some to be superstitious and unreal ; and as the divine origin of creation is altogether rejected, any supernatural action from above is openly and contemptuously repudiated. This bold profession of thorough-going atheism is so far, it is true, confined to a few writers comparatively in each of the former Christian countries ; but it cannot be denied that their following increases day by day. Should it become predominant—which Heaven avert !—the world would enter into an anti-social and anti-religious period the like of which has not yet been witnessed on earth, and it would then look indeed as if the approach of the last days, foretold by Christ and his apostles, was near at hand.

This short digression must not let us forget that the actual object of inquiry is the primeval period of mankind, in which we have recognized so far many characters of a true Church, under the law of nature, no doubt, yet under a strict supernatural law admitted by all. And the main character of this Church is the most pre-eminent and surprising ; namely, its real catholicity or universality. The higher up we go in the history of primeval religion, the more we find it prescribing the same dogmas, instituting the same rites, and acknowledging the same primordial facts of creation, the fall, the universal flood, and the communication of Heaven with our earth by revelation. The pretended fetichism and pantheism, which is, by some, assigned as the starting-point of all ancient religions, has been proved to have occurred at a much later period, and to have been, in fact, a decline, a debasement, a corruption of original belief and worship. From a large number of discoveries lately made in the annals of ancient nations, the previous assertion is proved beyond contradiction ; and the truly learned men who have lately scrutinized these most interesting questions come every day nearer and nearer to the acknowledgment of the unity of mankind at first in faith, social manners, and even exterior cult. Religion, therefore, began by

being catholic. The whole of mankind at first adored the same God, and offered him the same sacrifices.

There is no doubt in our mind that as new facts and new texts, chiefly in cuneiform writing, come to light, and confirm many conjectures which are now only probable, we shall finally possess a well-ascertained system of primeval religion, showing that it came from God no less than Judaism and Christianity.

### 3. *The Mosaic Dispensation did not suppose the exclusion of the Gentiles.*

It seems at first sight that by the calling of Abraham and the selection of his race for the great trust of the Scriptures and of the hope of a Redeemer, the nations in general were abandoned by Almighty God, and left to their "reprobate sense" as the Word has it. But it would be a great error to believe so.

And first, the race chosen by Heaven to bring on in due time the Christian universal religion by giving birth to its founder, and to its first apostles, was to be the Semitic, so different from the Aryan, which according to modern theorists has alone profited by it in a few of its branches. The future religion was to admit into its bosom, at its very origin, all the tribes of Palestine, the whole Egyptian nation, besides many Persians, and members even of the Hamitic family ; the whole of it without a single drop of Aryan blood. Let the mere mention of it suffice here, with the remark that if Mahometanism interfered with its spread in the East and South, that interference will not exist forever ; and with the near removal of the Turkish power, men shall see if the Asiatic and African races have forever rejected it, when it ought to be known that the Moslem's cimeter alone deprived them of the boon they had already accepted with joy, and of which they could not be deprived but by the violence of despair.

But apart from this consideration, which will occupy a good deal of our attention further on, the very providential act by which the Hebrews became "the people of God," instead of being a positive rejection and absolute condemnation of the "Gentiles," became for them a new source of graces, a restraint and check on their sinful idolatry, and were intended to prepare them gradually for the full light of the Gospel. The strict monotheism of the Jews, the nature of their God who could be known "*mente sola*," the solemnity of their rites, and the celebrity of the Temple of Jerusalem, had not for

their object in the divine mind to pronounce an anathema against other nations, but, on the contrary, to place before their eyes the great truths believed by their progenitors, contained yet in many of their traditions, and from which they had deviated only through the weakness of the human intellect, and the innate evil propensity of the human heart since the fall.

It is indeed to be well understood that although, at their entrance into the "promised land," the Jews were commanded not to have any intercourse with the Canaanite tribes which inhabited it, to wage against them an unrelenting war, and not permit them to dwell in their midst; although it was only owing to surprise and deceit that the Gabaonites were exempted from the anathema, and Samuel publicly reproved Saul for having spared Agag and the chiefs of the Amalekites, yet, after the end of the war, chiefly when peace being secured by the victories of David, Solomon began to build the Temple, and give to the worship of the true God all the solemnity known to the readers of the Bible, the dealings not only of the political power of the nation, but even of the Synagogue herself with foreign races took suddenly a different turn, and continued until the coming of Christ to show what we would call a liberal tendency, designed evidently to attract the Gentiles instead of repelling them. This tendency opened for them in fact a kind of semi-brotherhood, which the Jews, nevertheless, are often reproached with having never acknowledged; limiting, as they say, the kind feelings so frequently recommended in the Mosaic law to the brethren of the race alone. This is altogether unfounded.

Did not Solomon admit Hiram of Tyre almost in partnership with him for the building of the Temple? Did not the king of the great Phœnician city call Solomon in fact "his brother" when reproaching him gently for having given him "cities" of very little account in compensation for his invaluable services? This policy of Solomon, it is true, went finally so far that he married the daughters of idolatrous kings, and built temples to the gods of his wives, and for this was he condemned, and his posterity deprived of power. But we do not read that this condemnation extended to more than his positive introduction of idolatry on sacred soil. Free intercourse with Gentiles continued to be practiced by the best kings of Judah; and when foreign princes visited Jerusalem, the sacred precincts of the Temple were not for them forbidden ground.

Nay, the Synagogue herself opened her bosom, at least to a certain

extent, to the admission of the Gentiles, and to a communication in their favor of the sacred prerogatives of "the people of God." Was not one of the inclosures of the Temple consecrated to their admission during the holiest ceremonies? Did not the spirit of proselytism enter gradually into the nation? The more the opposition to idolatry prevailed among them, the more ardent the Jews became for converting idolaters and bringing them into their ranks. It is well known that during the four centuries which immediately preceded Christ, the nation never gave any sign of that propensity to polytheism so remarkable during the first ages of its history: and it is precisely at that later period that Hebrew proselytism was most fervent. The general opinion is, it is true, that the Jews despised too much the nations to care for them, and that they boasted of their privileges as incommunicable to other peoples; but this opinion is wrong certainly to a great extent, and our divine Lord himself gave them this testimony in his time, that "they encompassed sea and land to make one single proselyte." The only fault he found with them was that having already lost the idea of true religion, they could not communicate it to infidels, and bring them in truth to salvation; but as to the fact of their desire to spread Judaism among foreign people he could not testify to it in stronger terms than he did in the words just quoted.

To illustrate the fact under consideration by all the cases in point contained in the Old Testament, would fill many of these pages; but what has been said is, we think, sufficient. The nations at large were not excluded from the "dispensation" of the old law; they could avail themselves of its advantages if they chose; and many of them did so in the course of ages. But even for those who did not, who continued attached to their errors, and refused to "lift up their eyes" toward the Temple of the true God erected on the hill of Sion, it is sure that the Jewish monotheism was the source of many spiritual blessings, even when they continued to walk in "the shadow of death."

Let us picture to ourselves the effect which must have been produced on the Phœnicians, the Syrians, the Arabians, the Egyptians, and other nations and tribes farther removed, by the almost daily spectacle they enjoyed of the spiritual worship carried on in Jerusalem. The inhabitants of Palestine and the surrounding countries were all addicted to the worst kind of idolatry. The rites of Melcarte, Astarte, Mylitta, Baal, and other Phœnician and Syrian divini-

ties were notoriously infamous and devilish; and as, according to a great historical law, true at least in antiquity, the pretended progress of humanity was then decidedly one of declension and continually-increasing degradation, there is no telling where would have ended the religion—so called—prevailing in Sidon and Tyre, Ascalon and Gaza, Babylon and Accad, had it not been for the positive affirmation of the Jews residing among them and known to all of them, who declared openly their belief in one God, Supreme and Eternal, the Creator of and Well-wisher to men, the Holy, the All-good, the Promoter of holiness, purity, and love among his creatures, abhorring and forbidding cruelty and lust, and in his worship calling more for the offering of the heart than for that of carnal victims. Add to all this that this pure belief was supported by all the magnificence of external rites which the ingenuity of man could devise to give splendor to religion, and that often prodigies of a startling character impressed on it the seal of true heavenly approval. These simple remarks carry on the conviction that the exalted worship of Jerusalem must have acted powerfully on the feelings of the deluded polytheists in the neighborhood, and given them a yearning for embracing a religion so far above their own. It is not, therefore, going too far when we say that the Jewish dispensation added considerably to the spiritual treasures of mankind at large, and served to preserve in it something at least of its primitive catholicity as it was called.

The beautiful story of Naaman comes here appropriately to give point to these reflections. It is related at length in the fourth book of Kings, chapter the fifth: "He was a great man. . . . By him the Lord gave deliverance to Syria; and he was a valiant man and rich, but a leper. Now there had gone out robbers from Syria; and they had led captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited upon Naaman's wife. And she said to her mistress: 'I wish my master had been with the prophet that is in Samaria; he would certainly have healed him of his leprosy.' Then Naaman went to his lord, and told him, saying: 'Thus and thus said the girl from the land of Israel.' And the king of Syria said to him: 'Go, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.' And he departed and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment; and he brought the letter to the king of Israel in these words: 'When thou shalt receive this letter, know that I have sent to thee Naaman my servant, that thou mayest heal him of his leprosy.' And when the king of Israel had read the letter,

he rent his garments and said : ‘Am I God, to be able to kill and give life, that this man hath sent to me, to heal a man of his leprosy ? Mark, and see how he seeketh occasions against me.’ And when Eliseus the man of God had heard this, to wit, that the king had rent his garments, he sent to him, saying : ‘Why hast thou rent thy garments ? let him come to me, and let him know that there is a prophet in Israel.’

“So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and stood at the door of the house of Eliseus. And Eliseus sent a messenger to him, saying : ‘Go, and wash seven times in the Jordan ; and thy flesh shall recover health ; and thou shalt be clean.’ Naaman was angry, and went away, saying : ‘I thought he would have come out to me, and standing would have invoked the name of the Lord his God, and touched with his hand the place of the leprosy, and healed me. Are not the Abana and the Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel, that I may wash in them, and be made clean ?’ So as he turned, and was going away with indignation, his servants came to him, and said : ‘Father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, surely thou shouldst have done it ; how much rather what he now hath said to thee : “Wash and thou shalt be clean.”’ Then he went down, and washed in the Jordan seven times, according to the word of the man of God ; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child ; and he was made clean. And returning to the man of God with all his train, he came, and stood before him, and said : ‘*In truth I know there is no other God in all the earth, but only in Israel* : I beseech thee, therefore, take a blessing of thy servant.’ But Eliseus answered : ‘As the Lord liveth before whom I stand, I will receive none.’ And when he pressed him, he still refused. And Naaman said : ‘As thou wilt. But I beseech thee, grant to me thy servant, to take from hence two mules’ burden of earth : for thy servant will not henceforth offer holocaust, or victims, to other gods but to the Lord. Yet there is only this, for which thou shalt entreat the Lord for thy servant : when my master goeth into the temple of Remmon, to worship, and he leaneth upon my hand, if I bow down in the temple of Remmon, when he boweth down in the same place, that the Lord pardon me thy servant for this thing.’ And Eliseus said to him : ‘Go in peace.’”

It is not to be doubted that when the Syrian nobleman reached back to Damascus, he built an altar with the earth he had brought, —two mules’ burden—and henceforth all the “holocausts” and

“other victims” he offered were not immolated in honor of Remmon or any god of polytheist Syria, but only to the Supreme God of the Jews whom alone he recognized as his Lord. And if he fulfilled his office toward the king and accompanied him to the temple of the idol, all knew that he did not worship it when he bowed in compliance with his civil duty. He had become a Jewish proselyte and an adorer of the God Creator of heaven and earth. How many other men, in the course of time, were thus converted, we have no means of knowing ; but this single example would suffice to show that the Gentiles were not excluded from the service of God when the call of Abraham first, and afterward the divine mission of Moses, seemed to reduce to a single small nation the privileges of the true religion and of the rule of morality contained in the Decalogue. The Gentiles had lost nothing of what they possessed before ; but the presence of this peculiar and favored people among them increased yet their chances of salvation.

It is particularly in the four centuries which elapsed from the last prophet, Malachi, to the coming of our Lord, that the ardor of proselytism increased among the Jews, who embraced in their zeal almost the whole earth, as it was then known ; and a remarkable passage of the *Archæologia Biblica* of J. Jahn—a book otherwise far from irreprehensible—will give a striking, though, in fact, too slight, idea of it.\* “This spirit of proselytism was chiefly promoted by the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, on which occasion God himself, by the surprising victories with which he favored the cause of the Jews through the Maccabees, attracted the attention of the Gentiles ; so that entire nations like the Idumæans, the Ituræans, and the Moabites, accepted circumcision and Judaism. In Yemen—*Arabia Felix*—a little over a hundred years before Christ, the king was a Jew, and employed his power to propagate the Hebrew religion. The Jews in Asia Minor, Greece, and finally Rome, obtained many conversions to their belief. In Rome itself, owing to their numerous proselytes, they became often powerful politically, and their votes prevailed in the *comitia* ; and on account of their restless agitation they were at last ordered by Tiberius to leave Italy, and by Claudius, Rome ; decrees which remained inoperative. The ample privileges granted to them at Rome removed many of the obstacles which could have prevented pagans from embracing Judaism. Consequently the number of proselytes, chiefly women exempt from cir-

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\* Parte 8<sup>a</sup>, cap. i. § 803.

cumcision, continually increased, and the first annals of the New Testament often make mention of it.\* During the life of Christ, Izates, king of Adiabene, brought up by Jewish women, was circumcised, and propagated the Jewish religion in his kingdom.† Thus Providence prepared the way for spreading the Christian faith everywhere, as there were in all countries Jews and synagogues where the apostles could preach Jesus, and announce the Gospel likewise to the pagans through the proselytes.”

Since Jahn wrote this interesting paragraph, many other facts of the same character have been ascertained ; but none more striking than those brought out by the numerous discoveries in the catacombs, where large cemeteries of Jews and Jewish proselytes have been brought to light. It is, therefore, an error to imagine that the dispersion of the Hebrews began only at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Then indeed they lost their nationality, and became by force a race of wanderers ; but long before this time many had become willing exiles from Palestine, and the Jews of Egypt, of Alexandria particularly, formed a powerful and learned body of men, superior in every respect to those living at the period even in the Holy Land. What the *diaspora* of the Jews meant is now known. It embraced nearly the whole world.

*4. The Mosaic Law was a middle step between the Patriarchal Religion and Christianity. Its analogy with Catholicity.*

These considerations bring us naturally to examine a moment the particular ecclesiastical hierarchy of Judaism, as a step to the future and still stricter organism of the Church, such as it was to be established by Christ and his apostles. For we did not only ask ourselves the question, Did the Jewish dispensation add anything to the spiritual advantages of the Gentiles ? but also, Was the Jewish Church a more strict organization than that of the patriarchs ? And looking at it as a middle step between the looser form of the first, and the more perfect system of the second, we must see briefly its admirable adaptation to the past and the future ; giving our attention particularly to the character of Catholicity which, if it did not possess, at least it announced emphatically and promised with a sure and

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\* Acts ii. 11 ; vi. 5 ; xiii. 43 ; xvi. 14, 17 ; xviii. 7, 18 ; xix. 20 ; xiii. 50 ; xvi. 18, 15 ; xvii. 4, etc.

† Joseph. Arch. xx. 2, 4, 5.

firm voice. Thus the sequence of a true Catholic religion extends during the whole period of human history.

Some convincing reasons have been given to prove that the patriarchal society formed a real Church. The striking remark must be first insisted upon here, that all those points of faith and morals by which it was constituted an ecclesiastical body, the Jewish religion preserved, and stereotyped, if we may use the expression, and it rendered them eternal by the subsequent Christianity. Of this kind are the belief in one Supreme God, Creator of heaven and earth, ruling the universe by his providence, offering to man the means of reconciliation by expiatory rites, ready to receive his immortal soul after death, and during life directing his eyes toward a future Redeemer who would make again of mankind one family; *in eo benedicentur omnes gentes*, so often repeated in the Old Testament. This clear and firm conviction of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as it became that of Job—we know it from the book bearing his name—and no doubt that also of Melchisedec and many others, was forever consecrated by its insertion in the written words of Moses and the prophets, which were to form the heirloom not only of their race—the Jews—but likewise of all future nations—the Christians.

Besides this belief, the traditional facts likewise of the creation, the deluge, the providential dispersion of nations, and such like, passed from patriarchal tradition, and perhaps from some particular records such as those of which Job speaks: *insculpantur in silice*," into the divine treasure of the revealed word of God, which was to be sacred alike to the Jew and the Christian.

Finally the religious rites so often mentioned in Genesis, as those of *the fathers*; the offerings of perfumes, flowers, and fruits; the holocausts of animals, the elevation of the eyes and hands toward heaven, the solemnity of prayers recited aloud in the presence of hearers; all those exterior characteristics of a true priesthood became the chief points of a precise and much more developed ritual, which we possess yet in *Leviticus* and *Deuteronomy*.

Thus the Jewish religion looked *backward*, if we may say so, and became a real development of the patriarchal. But as it is particularly precious to us by its union with Christianity which it prepared and announced; as it foreshadowed it, and had on this account much more the strict characters of a Church than that of the patriarchs, we must look at it in these particularities, and see how it looked also *forward* to better times, and became, as it were, a substantial shadow

of a great future reality, the figure of a truth, the bud of a flower, the temporary outline of an eternal and living Temple.

Martin Bécan has given forth to the Christian world, about two hundred and fifty years ago, an admirable book called *Analogy of the Old and the New Testaments*, and Huet, the bishop of Avranches, in a great part of his *Demonstratio Evangelica*, treats of the same topic in his usual masterly manner. The Fathers of the Church long before them had referred to many points of this "analogy," and it may be said that Father M. Bécan and Bishop Huet have merely collected together the various texts of the Fathers on the subject, adding however a number of important remarks of their own, derived from their knowledge of Hebrew antiquities. It would be in part useless to analyze all that was said on the subject; but it is at least our duty to treat at some length of the various points of comparison between the Synagogue and the Christian Church, to show how they both form a whole, passing gradually from the temporary figure to the ever-enduring reality.

The first consideration worthy of a particular attention is that of the priesthood, which in the Mosaic law became undoubtedly the nearest possible approach to the Christian sacerdotal office. To judge best of the "analogy" of both, it is before all proper to see how much the Aaronic priesthood differed from the patriarchal, which among all other nations was gradually disfigured as they went down deeper into paganism.

Originally the chief of every family was its priest. He was entitled to offer prayers and sacrifices for the small community of which he was the head. If there appears to be an exception for Abel and Cain, whose chief was Adam, the Fathers assign the reason by stating that Abel, the first great figure of Christ by his death, deserves to be considered as the first priest; the sacrifices of his homicide brother being displeasing to God, who refused to acknowledge his priesthood. But, from that time down, the custom prevailed that the patriarch of a family or tribe was alone invested with the sacerdotal office. The rites were simple, as we all know, and there was no need of temples, as the worshipers were so few, and the functions so primitive and inartificial.

With the development of mankind into nations, by the extension of families and tribes, the worship of God required more solemnity, and more precise rules; then a regular priesthood grew up among the various races of men, no doubt previous to their lapse into pan-

theism or idolatry. The Asiatic Aryans and the Africans of Egypt and Ethiopia, seem to have been the first to intrust the care of religious rites and ceremonies to a caste created for that purpose ; and to have had the first idea of "sacred inclosures," out of which proceeded finally the construction of those magnificent temples whose remains we yet admire. In India, Central Asia, and Egypt, the sacerdotal character imposed the obligation of *doctrine* and *holy functions* ; so that to the priest alone was confided the *study* of the sacred books, and the *celebration* of the various rites. Hence the Brahmin alone in Hindostan could and was bound to learn the Vedas, and to him alone belonged the performance of all the rites of religion. The same may be said of the Egyptian priesthood. But in neither country can we see a real subordination of all under a single head. If each temple was placed under the rule of a single chief minister, no evidence proves that the various religious centres of the country were connected in any way, and formed a regular and universal hierarchy. This was brought out in Judea alone ; and the injunction of building but one Temple for the whole nation was not the determining cause of it, since the Aaronic priesthood, the work of Moses, long preceded the building of the Temple.

The priestly office, among the European Aryan races, was still of a much more loose character as to organization and subordinate relations. There never was in fact any regular sacerdotal order, neither in Greece nor in Rome, perhaps not even in Etruria, where the augural *science* first grew up and gave to superstition a long endurance.

But Moses, in promulgating the divine law with respect to the exterior worship of God, sketched the first outlines of a plan which was to be fully carried out in the future Christian Church. He delineated a large diagram emblematic of the eternal edifice which Christ was to raise, and which no power, human or Satanic, can ever destroy. Nothing can be more instructive and interesting than the details of this analogy.

And first in the very essence of the Jewish hierarchy there was a circumstance which brought it again for a moment in contact with the patriarchal worship, and explains sufficiently why a whole tribe—that of Levi—was consecrated to God; so that out of it all the ministers of religion were to be chosen invariably. Under the law of nature the elder son of every family was destined to be the priest, and to succeed his father in the divine office. In the Mosaic law, this was not to be

the case ; and although the reason of the difference is not stated in the Pentateuch, we may well imagine that in the passage from tribal to national, the State anywhere required in the externals of religion, as well as in politics, a modified organization. Had the priesthood continued to be composed of all the heads of families, it would have been difficult to establish in it that strict order which God had in view ; hence he “set apart” a whole tribe for ministerial functions ; otherwise there might have been in many cases a disturbance in the social relations of the Jews, chiefly with respect to the inheritance of property. It may be also that many men, in the higher ranks of society, would have hesitated to abandon the secular aims of ordinary citizens for the less enticing life of the servants of the Temple. The Supreme Pontificate would have been directly taken possession of by the kings, since the elder son of the royal family, being of necessity heir to the crown, would have been a member of the priesthood at the same time. This, above all, was to be avoided, that the Aaronic hierarchy might be a more perfect image of the future hierarchy of the Church, which was to be indeed independent of the political power by a limited civil authority of its own ; yet was to remain out of the general entanglements of politics, in order to benefit socially as well as religiously the Christian commonwealth. For these reasons, perhaps, and for others probably, was the change under consideration introduced among the Hebrews.

But to preserve the necessary connection with the past, since the Aaronic ministry was to be a “middle step” between the patriarchal sacerdotal office and the Christian, it was declared in the law that every elder born son of a family should be actually brought to the Tabernacle first and afterward to the Temple, as in truth consecrated to God ; yet should be “redeemed” from the ministerial office by a sacrifice and an offering ; so that he would not be henceforth bound to the service of the altar, for which the Levitical tribe was to be set apart. No stronger proof could be given of the union of the patriarchal and Jewish ministry and of the perpetuity of the same Church from Abel down to our own times. To prove it better still, after having taken this glance *backward* to the very origin of mankind, we must look *forward* from Aaron down to Christ ; and what directly strikes us most forcibly is the character of *unity* impressed on the Hebrew priesthood ; a unity which after all does not appear to have been much needed by the Jews, except as foreshadowing the absolutely necessary unity of the future Christian Church, in regard

to its universality. For if the Church was destined from its birth to be universal, it was necessary it should be *one*. Nobody can understand the possibility of the Catholic Church, if it were to be cut up in various sects, independent of each other. Supposing even that the same dogmas and the same sacraments might for a short time prevail in a number of independent dioceses or patriarchates ; unless a strict bond of unity connects them together—a bond which cannot be anything else than the voice of a representative of Christ—no one can imagine that these societies shall long remain members of the same Church, that is, preserve the same belief and the same standard of morals. To remain *universally* the same, it must be absolutely *one*, consequently under one chief. Independently of many other considerations, the history of Arianism has abundantly proved this truth. The authority of the Pope, even at that time, saved the Church from the Arian heresy ; and indecision in many minds with respect to it caused the prolongation of the difficulty.

It was just said that for the Jews there was no absolute necessity of such a strict unity ; because among them an exact dogmatic teaching—except with respect to the unity of God and the promise of a Redeemer—was never required. When one knows that the Sadducees, who denied the immortality of the soul, were never thrown out of the Synagogue, he understands how far the belief necessary for a share in Judaism was elastic, or, rather, shadowy and unsubstantial. Supposing the moral code of the Decalogue to be admitted by all, and the rites contained in *Leviticus* to be observed, we do not see why there should not have been several high-priests enjoying the same authority. The declaration of the will of God ascertained by the *Urim* and *Thummim*, the highest prerogative after all of the Supreme Pontificate among the Jews, could very well be supposed to be in the possession of several high ministers of religion, the same as the declaration of the future by the gift of prophecy was at all times granted to a number of men, many of whom did not even belong to the sacerdotal order.

Why there was so strict a unity in the Aaronic hierarchy would remain almost unintelligible, had we not to fall upon the “analogy” of the Old Testament with the New ; and to understand it better, it is important to consider all the circumstances bearing on this analogy.

First, in the tribe of Levi, the family of Aaron alone formed the sacerdotal class ; the other members of the tribe were Levites—ine-

rior ministers of the Temple. Of all ancient and modern nations it is only among the Hebrews that the priesthood was thus confined absolutely to the posterity of one man. Moses himself, the brother of Aaron, was not, and could not be a priest. In the New Testament Christ Jesus himself conferred the supreme priesthood on his twelve apostles, and each of them could transmit it to others. The fact peculiar to Aaron among the Jews cannot, therefore, refer to all the apostles of Christ, and must look only to one of them, the Prince—*Princeps*—and we know that this one was Peter. Aaron, the first high-priest, therefore, represents Peter, the first Pope. This “analog” is most striking; as no fact of this character can be found in the priesthood of any other nation.

In the second place, the law prescribed that at the death of Aaron, his eldest living son should succeed him—this was Eleazar—and among the successive first-born men of the posterity of Eleazar were to be always chosen the high-priests of the nation, unless some of them were to be excluded on account of any of the irregularities mentioned in the law. In this last case the priesthood was to be transferred to the posterity of Ithamar, the other son of Aaron. This happened for the first time at the end of the period of the Judges, when Heli received the Supreme Pontificate; and it remained in this branch of the family until Solomon restored it to the posterity of Eleazar in the person of Sadoc, by deposing Abiathar, offspring of Ithamar, who had conspired against him.

Father Becan states that the Supreme Pontificate remained, as a rule, in the house of Eleazar, and came into the possession of that of Ithamar only exceptionally, and most of the time for a short period. Chronologists can thus form a list of the Jewish high-priests, from Aaron down almost to the time of Christ; and though the succession cannot so easily be ascertained as that of the Popes, yet there is such analogy between them that a close observer cannot but be struck with the resemblance. To render it more perfect still, there was in the old law an interruption during the Babylonish Captivity, as there has been in the new a period of doubt during the great Western Schism, just after the occupation of Avignon by the Popes, which was called likewise by some writers a kind of “Babylonish Captivity.”

It was only after the destruction of the Asmonean race that the Supreme Pontificate in Judea lost almost totally its character, and became, in the hands of the Herods and other tyrants, a sort of a plaything of which they disposed according to their caprice, and

often for the furtherance of their own odious projects. But the Old Testament was then expiring ; its object was fulfilled ; and the Messiah, so long promised, was at the moment of appearing. A new pontificate was going to be inaugurated in the person of Peter, permanent this time, and never to end ; so that even if deprived of its exterior splendor, the Christian Supreme Pontiff was not to become, like the Jewish at the end, a political tool, and his office a worldly prize for ambitious men ; but, on the contrary, the more it would be rejected and ignored by godless nations, the more it would assert its authority and independence.

But the analogy between the old and the new priesthoods can be carried much further than what results in their *unity*. The great prerogative of the Christian pontificate was to be its *unerrancy*. Did the Jewish high-priest possess anything of what we call infallibility ? What was said a few pages back of the limited dogmatic teaching among the Jews seems opposed to the supposition ; yet it is not so in fact ; and the Aaronic sacerdotal office was a most striking image, emblem, figure, of the highest prerogative of our Popes ; whose assertion in our day created, and creates still at this moment, such a puerile astonishment among uninformed people, as if the pontifical infallibility was a modern invention, never thought of before ; nay, a sacrilegious presumption assumed without any warrant from God or man. Every person sufficiently acquainted with ecclesiastical history knows that the “invention” is not modern ; that there is a real divine and most positive warrant for that supposed presumption ; but it is curious to see that even the temporary image of the Christian priesthood possessed that surprising prerogative ; and as the subject is important, we must thoroughly convince ourselves of it. Some Catholic theologians deny it ; Father Becan insists on its truth. Let us hear his reasons.

First, it is true that the list of positive dogmas imposed on the mind of the Jews was not, and could not be, as extensive as that of the Christian creed. The existence of God, his unity and Providence, beside the hope of a Redeemer or Messiah, were almost the only articles positively enjoined in the Synagogue. Many other objects of belief, contained in the Old Testament, were no doubt presented often to the Hebrew mind ; and as there was a positive injunction for all to read often the law, the well-informed Jew admitted, no doubt, many other truths which are clearly contained in the Christian belief. Thus, with respect to God, all his necessary attri-

butes—his goodness, eternity, immensity, infinite knowledge, omnipotence, etc.—were the consequence of his very name: *Qui est.* He had created heaven and earth ; man, to his own image and likeness ; he would grant him eternal life if faithful ; death, if disobedient. The mystery of the Divine Trinity was not clearly revealed to the Jews ; yet from many passages of the Old Testament it could be inferred. Theologians know them and use them to prove the Trinity in God ; the Jews could consequently have an idea of it, although they were not bound to profess their belief in it, as Christians are. The same may be said of the divinity of the future Messiah : that he was to come and redeem men was an article of faith—not that he was to be substantially God ; although it could be inferred from many texts.

No more for the Jew than for the Christian was faith sufficient for salvation ; good works were absolutely required ; and an immense number of passages of the old law can be quoted to prove it. But without going into a more detailed account of the Hebrew creed, the great question recurs, What authority had the high-priest in matters of faith and morality ? A great number of articles of belief were rather an object of inquiry and logical inference than an absolute duty of obedience to authority. Thus, the proposition, “God has created man to his image and given him an immortal soul,” could be divided into two parts : the first, namely, the creation of man to the image of God, was as much a matter of faith in the old dispensation as in the new ; the second, namely, the immortality of the soul, so clear a consequence of the first part of the proposition, was certainly admitted by the great majority of the Jews ; yet, if any denied it, he was not on that account expelled from the Synagogue, but, with those who denied also the resurrection of the body, he was allowed to enter the Temple and offer sacrifices, not as a proselyte only, but as a Jew. The high-priest in the old law does not appear to have made use of his spiritual authority to define as of faith what was contained in the Bible merely in virtue of a necessary consequence. Yet with all this he was the oracle of the nation, the mouth-piece of God, and what he declared in this capacity was definitive and final. On this account he was to be consulted on all subjects of importance in religion, and his decision bore the impress of divine authority ; either, first, on legal ceremonies and rites, including consequently texts of Scripture whose meaning he alone could surely certify ; or, second, on doubtful questions of great mo-

ment, having reference sometimes to the whole nation, and occasionally to private affairs only. On such occasions the high-priest consulted God through the *Urim* and *Thummim*, whose real nature has not been completely elucidated by the long dissertations indulged in either by rabbis or by Christian expositors. It is sure, however, that they were somewhat connected with the *rationale*, a part of the dress of the pontiff; the meaning of the words was literally *light* and *truth*. But what particularly concerns us is the authority of the decision as asserted in Holy Writ.

To understand better how far the authority of the high-priest went in that regard, it is proper to remember that it was comparatively seldom invoked in the first instance; but almost always applied to after the ordinary appointed judges, doctors, or ecclesiastical courts had failed to come to a decision.

Learned men recognize two different kinds of judicial officers. 1st. An inferior one, established by Moses on the advice of Jethro.\* To this body belonged, it seems, the judges appointed subsequently in Palestine, to decide in the various cities, towns, and villages on the doubtful points of the law.†

2d. The superior council called *Sanhedrim*, as recorded in Numbers,‡ was composed of seventy members, and continued to exist, it is said by some, until the destruction of the second Temple. The high-priest presided over its deliberations, but does not seem to have ever attempted to impose his opinion on the council; for this was not for him the occasion to consult God through the *Urim* and *Thummim*, since to do so he had to wait until all ordinary means of reaching the truth had been taken. But when this happened, all the circumstances pointed out in the Old Testament go to prove that he had really the prerogative of what we call infallibility; his decision was to be accepted *sub pena mortis*; § there was no appeal from it; and it was not the same as in our ordinary courts, where the last judge pronounces without appeal also, merely because there must be an end to disputes; and the infallibility of the judges cannot be drawn from it as a consequence. In the case of the high-priest everything being divine in the institution, God pledged his truth, as it were, in it, and was bound, if we may use the expression, to suggest to the

\* Exod. xviii. 13, et seq.

† Deut. xvi. 18, 19. *Judices et magistros constituies in omnibus portis tuis, quas Dominus Deus dederit tibi, per singulas tribus tuas; ut judicent populum justo judicio.*      ‡ Num. xi. 16, 17, 25.      § Deut. xvii. 12.

last judge a rightful decision. Hence, in all the cases of it mentioned in the Old Testament and the New, the decision of the pontiff is ascertained to have been the proper one. A few of them are quoted in Father Becan's *Analogia*. A very remarkable one concerning the personal safety of David is given in detail;\* another on a subsequent victory can be read.† Bethlehem is pointed out to the wise men as the birthplace of the Messiah, according to the Scriptures.‡ The Gospel itself ascribes the words of Caiaphas, “*Expedit unum hominem mori pro populo,*”§ to the spirit of true prophecy and interpretation of the Scriptures, because he was high-priest.

Several of the examples just given out show that the authority of the pontiff was not confined to decisions on legal ceremonies and rites, although even these required what every theologian understands by the word infallibility, since they invariably suppose the interpretation of the sacred text. But in the case of the sacerdotal decision given to the wise men, and of the exclamation of Caiaphas, no one can deny that the prerogative under consideration was really meant.

It is certain that all the circumstances mentioned or supposed on the subject, in the Scriptures, point out to a real gift of unerrancy. The distinction between the whole Sanhedrim and the pontiff alone; the solemn invocation of God by the Urim and Thummim; the penalty of death pronounced against the rebellious, not by a fallible lawgiver, but by God himself; finally, in cases affecting the whole people, when the king addressed the Supreme Pontiff with the solemn words, “*Applica ephod,*” nothing but an infallible decision can satisfy the religious mind.

Hence, all the pretended examples and texts brought forward by the old Lutherans—who admitted the fact of the supreme and last decision uttered by the high-priest, but pretended that he could fall into error—all the objections raised by them from the Old Testament, are childish indeed, and more than usually sophistical, having no weight whatever in opposition to the proofs just alleged, proofs which could be made much more striking still by a far greater number of details and examples. Of course they said that Aaron was the cause of the idolatry of the people, and proposed them the golden calf to worship; when it is well known that Aaron was not yet high-priest at the time; that it was not he who cast the golden calf; that

\* 1 Reg. xxiii. 9, et seq.

† Matt. ii. 8, et seq.

‡ 1 Reg. xxx. 7, et seq.

§ Joan. xviii. 14.

he did not propose it to the adoration of the people, but the people forced him to give an exterior and unwilling consent. They spoke of the participation of Urias in the idolatry of Achaz ; as if the question was not of impeccability only. Urias did not consult God before consenting to the sin of the king, and did not afterward try to justify himself even by the flimsy pretext that God had spoken. They foolishly quoted the text of Jeremias : “*a propheta usque ad sacerdotem omnes faciunt dolum ;*” as if there was in this phrase the most remote mention of the prerogative of the high-priest. Their other objections do not even deserve to be mentioned ; and it is very remarkable that on such a question, so important at the time with respect to the active controversy going on between the Church and Lutheranism, nothing better could be found to prop their great and cardinal principle of the fallibility of the Head of the Church in the Old or New Testament.

Nothing is more calculated than these details to show the striking analogy of both dispensations. When the Old Testament is read on the subject, any one sufficiently well read in ecclesiastical history imagines he peruses one of the numerous pages in which the position of the Pope in Christendom is graphically described by ecclesiastical writers. He sees, during the long series of centuries from the birth of Christianity to our very days, questions of every kind affecting belief or morals addressed from every part of the earth to the Supreme Pontiff ; we may say, in the very words of David to Abiathar, “*Applica ephod.*” To make a trial of it, it is sufficient to open the correspondence of the Popes as far as it has been preserved, and there appears, from the epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians, from those of Victor to the bishops of Asia, or of Cornelius to those of Africa, from those, finally, of Gregory the Great to all the parts of the world, down to the pontiffs of our times, the same great truth manifesting itself, in spite of the unbelief of many, and of the doubts of others.

This long series of epistolary facts is, after all, the most practical, sensible, and convincing proof of the prerogative under consideration. For although no one can say that all the letters of the Popes decide questions of dogmas or morality ; that a great number of them furnish direct proofs of their gift of infallibility, and must be considered as so many positive effusions of the Holy Ghost ; although very many of them, no doubt, treat of questions of minor importance, unconnected with Christian faith in its strict sense,—and were

not indited by the writers with any intention of imposing their views so as to be necessarily accepted under pain of anathema, yet it cannot be denied that on many great occasions, accompanied by circumstances known to theologians, such was undoubtedly the fact ; and at all times true Christians acknowledged as peremptory and authoritative what other rash and inconsistent children of the Church called sometimes “the pretensions of the court of Rome.” And the proof of it is that, invariably, when it was a question of decisions of importance, given with a kind of solemnity and addressed to the Church at large, the Church accepted the decree, which became afterward for Christians a part of their belief, or a sure direction for their morals. For the Church can never be separated from her Head ; and when the Head speaks, the body must give its assent. In a great number of these cases, however, the submission is due to the authority of the Supreme Pontiff, not to his infallibility.

But these considerations are digressive, and we must come back to the main question. The analogy of both dispensations has been considered only with regard to their respective unity and authority. We must conclude this branch of the subject by a few remarks on the analogy of the whole Synagogue with the whole Christian Church. So far we have examined the heads of both ; our next step must be to place in juxtaposition body with body. For the word *Synagogue* is the same as *Ecclesia* ; and both expressions refer not only to the ruling powers in both, to what is called with us *Ecclesia docens*, but likewise to the whole congregation ; as the English language has it, to the faithful, as the mystic body of Christ.

##### 5. *Inner Spirit of Jews and Christians.*

The first thing to be analyzed is the inner spirit of both. It is generally said that charity is the inner spirit of Christianity, and fear was that of the Synagogue, and to a certain extent this is true. From the time of the apostles down to our own, both laws are known as “the law of fear” and “the law of love ;” yet often the idea is misconceived, and a wrong conclusion is drawn with respect to the Mosaic law, which would, in this case, bear no analogy to the Christian dispensation, but be on the contrary its opposite. So natural is the deception, owing to several texts of the Old and the New Testament which it is easy to misinterpret, that many theologians and exegetists of excellent repute have not hesitated to assert that there

was not any promise made to the Jews of an eternal life ; that, in fact, there was, in their opinion, no hereafter, and that only happiness in this world was to be the reward of the faithful observer of even the moral law. As to the precept of charity, they say it existed for the Jews only with respect to their countrymen ; but no other feeling except that of enmity and *hatred* was enjoined upon them in regard to the rest of mankind. Among these authors we are sorry to be obliged to number Father M. Becan himself ; and the subject being of extreme importance in view of forming a right judgment of the true character of the Jewish people, it is proper to quote the very words of this distinguished and most Catholic writer, in order to correct fully afterward the wrong impression they may give. For there is no need of mentioning that this opinion has been fully and eagerly adopted by some Protestant writers, and with more heartiness still by the numerous array of free-thinkers of the stamp of Voltaire. Everybody knows how the Ferney patriarch gloated over the gloomy and forbidding idea this conception of the inner life of the Hebrews gives to mankind, of his hated and detested *Juifs*.

Father Becan asks himself first " If life eternal was promised in the Old Testament ? " and he answers correctly enough, that it was not in express terms—*expresse*. But in detailing his proofs the meaning is plain that it was not promised at all, and the Jews had no idea of it. " The difference," he says, " between the old and the new dispensation is that, in the old, earthly and temporal happiness was proposed, in the new, a heavenly and eternal one. In the first Isaias \* said : ' *Si volueritis et audieritis me, bona terræ comedetis* ; ' in the second : ' *Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum cœlorum.* ' " † Then, together with some other texts of the Bible, Becan gave passages of St. Paul ‡ and of St. Augustine, § favorable to his opinion. But above all, in answering the objections which could be raised, he endeavored to prove that his meaning was absolute, and that in his opinion the Jews could not think of any other reward of virtue but what was confined to this life ; and could not imagine any other punishment of sin but what was included in the same narrow compass. And his last remark was that, as St. Paul || says expressly, " The New Testament has received better promises than the Old." This would not be true, he said, if in both life eternal had been promised.

\* Cap. i. v. 19.

† Matt. v. 8.

‡ Ad Gal. 4.

§ In Psalm lxxviii.

|| Heb. viii. 6.

With respect to the “*dilectio proximi*” in the old law, the same author sets forth an opinion harsher still, which would make of the Hebrews a nation inferior, in their inner life, to the pagans themselves. His language first is rather obscure, and might be explained in a more liberal sense; but in the end it becomes fearfully clear. For, not satisfied, it seems, with having asserted that “the chief difference between the Jews and the Christians is that the first—*vi præcepti Mosaici*—were bound to ‘love’ only the Jews, who alone were included in the word *neighbors*; not the Gentiles, their natural enemies: whilst the Christians—*vi præcepti evangelici*—must ‘love’ all, even those that hate them;” not satisfied with this general assertion, unmodified by any explanatory expression, he goes further yet, when, directly after, he answers the objections naturally drawn from many texts of the old law, in which the Jews are positively commanded to “love” even their enemies—namely, to take care of the cattle of those who had injured them, if they found them running wild, and bring them back to their owners; and many other prescriptions of the kind, contained in Deuteronomy. The answer is positively appalling: “All these texts,” he says, “have reference not to the ‘true’ enemy, the Gentile; but to the Jew, toward whom any other Jew was forbidden to entertain hostile feelings: and this appears clearly,” he says, “from other passages of Deuteronomy, where instead of ‘*inimicus*’ the text says, ‘*frater*;’ but when it does speak of true enemies, namely, of the Gentiles, then the Jews *are ordered to kill them and destroy them entirely—Delebis nomen ejus sub caelo.*”\* Thus Father Becan generalizes what is said not only in the Pentateuch, but likewise in the book of Joshua, of the Canaanites alone; and his expressions convey the frightful meaning that the Hebrews had received a positive divine command to entertain an eternal feeling of hatred against all the rest of mankind—*Gentiles*—and to work actively for the destruction of all those who did not belong to the race of Abraham. Voltaire certainly supposed it in his numerous pamphlets against the Jews, and triumphed evidently as if he had found an unanswerable argument against revelation. But, thank God! this is not true; and the “analogies” between the Old and the New Testament is carried out, even on the ground we now survey, as far, at least, as the natural leanings of the Jewish people could bear it. They were certainly a hard-hearted people, and had not received

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\* Deut. xxv. 19.

that tender soul which was to be created in man by the new dispensation. Hence there was a great difference between them and the future disciples of Christ, both with respect to hope and charity. Earthly hopes were calculated to make more impression upon them, and consequently were oftener presented to their view ; their hearts could not yet expand and embrace the whole world ; at least for many of them ; and consequently charity had not for them exactly the same meaning that it must have for us. But if their notion of either had been such as was just explained by Father Becan, the two dispensations would have been, not *analogous*, but altogether *opposite* ; and it is important to prove they were not.

To the author of *Analogia* we will oppose Father Suarez, of the same Society of Jesus as Becan was. It will be a brotherly contest, ending, we hope, in mutual satisfaction ; but certainly the Christian feelings of all modern readers will be fully gratified, and the professed enemies of our holy religion deprived of a triumphant argument.

With respect to the *hopes* of the Jews the great Spanish theologian, treating the subject with his usual completeness, leaves nothing obscure on the subject, but illuminates the whole with his powerful though gentle light. And first he shows with convincing proofs that the Jews knew there was a “hereafter ;” and it would be strange indeed if they did not, as no pagan nation was left without a more or less clear notion of an “elysium” or a “tartarus.” And not only they knew it, but the *ultimate end* of their *law* was “the felicity, spiritual and supernatural, of the people, not only in this life, by teaching them a pure morality and true sanctity ; but even in a future world, by a supernatural happiness.”\* But the most curious remark, which had not even come to the mind either of F. M. Becan, or, it seems, to that of some Fathers of the Church whom he quotes, is contained in the following passage, which must be literally rendered : “In St. Matthew † some one”—*quidam*—a Jew certainly, “inquired of Christ, ‘What will I do, in order to obtain eternal life?’ Christ answered him that by keeping the commandments of the law, he could gain eternal life. . . . Likewise in St. Luke † a lawyer having asked the question, ‘What he should do, to obtain life eternal?’ Christ likewise answered

\* *De Legibus*, lib. ix. cap. iii. § 3. He proves it, after St. Thomas (1<sup>—</sup>2<sup>nd</sup> quest. 98, art. i. et quest. 99, art. ii.) by a number of texts of the Old Testament and some passages of St. Paul and of the Acts.

† Matt. xix.

† Luke x.

him, 'What is written in the law—how do you read the law?' meaning certainly that the law had been given as a sure road to reach eternal life." These two remarkable, although so simple, passages, prove evidently that the Jews knew there was a "hereafter;" and Christ, the teacher of truth, has positively held forth that the Mosaic dispensation could lead a man to eternal happiness. And after these remarks there was scarcely any need on the part of the great Spaniard to add new reasons to those texts, as he does, by showing at length that God did not give the old law only as the "author of nature," but likewise as the "supernatural author of grace," etc. We will shortly come back to the subject.

But the question of "promise" on the part of God, and of "hope" consequently on the part of the Hebrews, is a most direct one in the subject under investigation; and in treating it Father Suarez shows how the theologians and exegetists of a contrary opinion were deceived, by not distinguishing sufficiently in the old law what was purely of a civic character, having reference only to this life, from the far superior part of the same, having a religious and moral scope, which must necessarily relate to another world. Whenever, as he amply shows, the sacred records speak pointedly of an earthly reward, they represent the Mosaic dispensation as directing the Jewish people to a happy national life, or the individual Hebrew to a conformity with the civil law which was destined to insure earthly happiness. And certainly the chief object of all legislative acts of this nature for all peoples is the temporal welfare of the citizen and the prosperity of the nation, which can exist only in this world. But many other passages of the Old Testament prove that the purely moral laws of the Jews—viz., those contained in the Decalogue—and even the civil laws as expressing the will of God, and leading the individual to the accomplishment of the precept of obedience and submission to the divine injunctions, had far superior promises attached to them, as any one can read particularly in the exhortations of the prophets and the Psalms of David; for instance, in the 18th and in the 118th. The whole 72d Psalm can have no meaning unless its object is the eternal loss of the sinner, and the endless reward of the just in the bosom of God in heaven, etc. In the New Testament many texts lead to the same conclusion; for instance, this one, "*If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,*"\* words of our

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\* Matt. xix.

Saviour to a Jew and concerning the Jewish precepts; and that of St. Paul, “*The doers of the law shall be justified.*”\* Our Lord himself, after hearing the Jewish lawyer rehearse the precepts of the Decalogue, on the love of God and of the neighbor, replied, “*Well answered; do this and thou shalt live.*” He knew that the Jew to whom he spoke would rightly understand it of the true life, namely, that of heaven, because all Hebrews were perfectly conversant with this intent and purpose of their law.

It is not a little curious that Mr. Matthew Arnold, the writer of *Literature and Dogma*, a book so replete with ideas most offensive to the Christian, has fully comprehended this object of the Mosaic law; and in the number of the *Contemporary Review* for January 1, 1875, he speaks with a sort of enthusiasm of the exalted notion the Jews entertained of “righteousness,” and quotes several passages of the Psalms as perfectly clear on the subject, and among them repeats several times the one mentioned above, of the 118th Psalm. The thing in fact is so striking, that any reader without pre-conceived ideas is at once impressed with the truth that the Hebrews had very nearly the ideas we have of the moral law, and expected for their observance of it the reward we expect.

The chief difficulty, however, of this part of our inquiry regards the very meaning of the precept of *charity*, not of *hope*; and we have heard, a few pages back, the interpretation supposed to have been given to it by the Jews. Is it true, we must ask ourselves, that they were commanded by the Mosaic law to “love” only those of their nation? and is it true that there was in it a positive injunction for them to “hate” and “destroy” all Gentiles? This seems to be the opinion of some Catholic writers, and they appear to have on their side several texts of Fathers of the Church. We have asserted that in this case the inner life of the Jews would have been in open antagonism to that of the Christians, and there could be no “analogy” whatever between both. Let us hear what Father Suarez says on the question. He treats of it chiefly in two chapters of his work *De Legibus*. † In the first of these he enumerates three *ends* or objects of this law. We begin by the third: “It was,” he says, “to instruct the people of God how to follow the principles of right and justice, not only with respect to the natural rectitude of each in-

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\* Ad Rom. ii. 18.

† Lib. ix. cap. iii. de fine, et cap. iv. de materia legis veteris.

dividual, but direct them—evidently as members of a commonwealth—in religious worship and correct polity." Secondly, that object was also "to teach the Jews what was just and right, not only in temporal matters, but likewise in spiritual and supernatural ones." Thirdly and finally, "to preserve and increase among all men the explicit faith in a future Christ ; and by the means of this faith to prepare and dispose a peculiar people to bring on his advent."

Being unable to enter into details, there remains for us only to mention the conclusions, namely, that the object of the Mosaic dispensation was, firstly, to promulgate publicly the moral law written in the conscience of every man, and teach it thoroughly to the Jews through that positive promulgation by Moses ; secondly, to add a spiritual and supernatural object to it ; so that God had given that law not only as "*auctor naturæ*," but also as "*auctor gratiæ*"—a subject which will directly require a particular development. If the Jewish law itself did not give grace, and if its ceremonies, rites, or even sacraments, did not contain or impart to man any elements of grace whatever, yet, as the help of God is given to all, the Jews certainly were not deprived of it ; nay, were powerfully helped to it by the very empty elements of their law. Thirdly and finally, to prepare the advent of Christ by keeping everywhere in the law the figure and promise of the Messiah who was to be sent for all nations ; so that the Jewish people, instead of being placed by their law in antagonism to all other races, were in fact the help and the hope of the whole world, and could be considered as the nucleus around which at some future day all nations would be aggregated. Thus were they to prepare that catholicity which has been so eloquently announced by all their prophets.

By this very simple sketch the Hebrews already appear under an aspect totally different from the one presented by the opinion of Father Becan. But a far greater light is thrown upon the subject, when, in Chapter IV. of this Ninth Book, Father Suarez speaks *de materia legis veteris*, namely, spreads out before the reader the various precepts of that law as they were intended by God, given by Moses, and understood by the Jews.

He considers them at first in general, and proves that they were certainly "holy and promotive of virtue," explaining at length the apparently contradictory words of Ezekiel, \* and of St. Paul. †

\* *Ezekiel xx.*

† *Ad Heb. viii.*

He remarks likewise that the “moral precepts” of the old dispensation “belonged certainly to the “natural law,” and he refers to the long dissertation he had previously written, when treating of the subject in the same work, *De Legibus*. There he had proved that “*lex naturalis*” has God for its author, and all its precepts cannot but be “*honesta* ;” and the discussion of this most interesting subject brought out the consideration of the Decalogue itself, and of the Gospel of Christ, and Father Suarez had applied most felicitously to this subject the axiom of Gratian in his *Decretum*, “In principle the natural law is the same that is contained in that of Moses and in the Gospel.”

The question here naturally occurs, If the natural law already obliges man to the fulfillment of whatever is right and just, what necessity is there of the Mosaic precepts and of the Gospel even? And this—let the reader remark it—is the main objection of all those who refuse to admit the revealed word of God—they think and say the “natural law” is sufficient. To this Father Suarez answers: “This revelation was not only proper but absolutely necessary, because human reason has been profoundly obscured by sin, even with regard to all moral and natural precepts.”\* And he quotes on the subject a striking passage of Thomas Aquinas.

All the difficulties raised by the opinion of Father Becan have evidently disappeared ; since it is directly against all possible natural law to admit that any nation must “hate” and endeavor to “destroy” any or all of the others ; and it is, on the contrary, an indestructible principle of the human conscience “to do to others what we wish others should do to us.” But the details into which the great Spanish theologian enters render the conclusion much clearer still, and explain away completely the various reasons alleged on the other side. It is good, therefore, to follow him a little longer. And to understand more thoroughly what the distinguished writer says of several precepts of the old law, considered as belonging to the natural and divine orders respectively, it is proper to examine what is meant when he says that God gave the law of the Old Testament, both as “author of nature” and as “author of grace.” It is evident that if the natural law came from God as author of nature, divine law must have come from God as author of grace ; so that even the Mosaic dispensation was intended for a supernatural object,

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\* Lib. ix. *De Leg. Veter.* cap. iv.

and looked to the order of grace. Yet it must be admitted by all Christians that in itself it did not confer grace ; that none of its institutions, rites, sacraments could convey grace to the soul of man. Circumcision itself, which comes so near to the nature of a sacrament that many theologians have called it so—some have imagined that in fact this rite was intended to do away with original sin in man—circumcision was a mere token of the covenant of God with the people of Israel, a mere sign of the exterior alliance of God with the race of Abraham, and not a sign of any inward grace whatever. It could not be called a sacrament, although grace might be attached to it as to an exterior condition.

Yet the question recurs, treated at length in the work *De Legibus*,\* “Whether the old law justified ?” and to what conclusions did the author arrive on the subject ? To several most important ones. There can be no question of a real justification, such as the sacraments of the new dispensation operate in the soul of man ; it is excluded absolutely by a number of texts, chiefly of St. Paul. Yet there are difficulties in this very truth, so elementary in appearance, which are examined at length by Suarez, who shows in particular that if the rite of circumcision was not a sacrament like baptism, yet “in its institution it was something like a remedy of original sin,” as Innocent III. declared.

But, if the Mosaic rites, sacraments, and laws could not confer grace “*ex opere operato*,” as theologians say, could they not to a great extent “*ex opere operantis*” ? That is : Did they not prescribe and make a strict obligation of many things to which justification was then attached, so that this law was to the Jews the source of many spiritual blessings far superior to whatever the Gentiles possessed, which brought on a striking and holy “analogy” between the Israelites and the Christians ? This is what the great Spanish theologian shows *in extenso* of the three virtues of *faith*, *hope*, and *charity*, besides that of heartfelt *repentance* ; and on this subject we must enter into some details, as nothing can give a better insight into the inner life of the children of Abraham.

He acknowledges indeed that some Catholic theologians deny the fact of such precepts of faith, hope, and charity, as prescribed to the Jews by the Mosaic law ; for the reason that if it had been so, they would have been justified “*ex operibus legis*,” which cannot be ad-

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\* Lib. ix. cap. vii.

mitted after the positive and emphatic assertions of St. Paul. Yet, after stating fairly, as usual with him, the grounds of the opinion sustained by those theologians, he repeats that "he still believes as perfectly true—*verissimam*—the doctrine he had already expressed before," that, "the Mosaic law enjoined acts of true repentance and of the theological virtues," and he confirms it by a very remarkable text of St. Thomas,\* where the great doctor of the middle ages proves that acts of all virtues, including the theological, were commanded by the old law in such a way that men were thus *prepared* to enter into a holy communion with God, and become his friends, *ex bonitate quæ facit hominem sanctum*.

Then coming down to particulars, he proves that *faith* is prescribed in various passages of the Pentateuch; particularly in Exodus, in Deuteronomy; † even faith in a future Redeemer, Deuteronomy, † etc. *Hope* likewise is repeatedly insisted upon; and finally *charity*, in many remarkable texts.

The acts of virtue enjoined in the old law being thus understood, and the precepts of charity being one of them, the *dilectio proximi*, as intimated in the Decalogue, must also be understood so as to render man virtuous and good, *bonitate quæ facit hominem sanctum*. Consequently the meaning of it, as insisted upon by Father Becan, could not be the right one; and it is particularly in this part of the inquiry that we are led to see the wide distinction between them, so as to leave no room for hesitation and doubt on the subject.

Hence we must not be surprised that whenever Suarez comments on the text of the Decalogue, as given by God through Moses to the Jews, he understands it exactly as we Christians do, and extends the concept of "neighbors" to the whole of mankind. The natural law had the same intent, but not so clearly expressed; for there can be no doubt that the precept contained in St. Matthew, § "Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them," is one of the most precise and fundamental of the natural principles imprinted on the heart of man; and from it the law of charity, as embracing all men, can be clearly deduced.

But Suarez is not content with this. He examines with more details the precept of the "*dilectio proximi*," as contained in the Decalogue and understood by the Jews; and he does not seem in the least to countenance the doctrine of those theologians who think

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\* 1<sup>o</sup> 2<sup>o</sup>, qu. 100, art. ii. † Exod. xx. Deut. vi. † Deut. xviii. § Matt. vii.

the Jews applied it only to their friends and countrymen, and were even forbidden by their law to extend it to the Gentiles, whom they were bound "to hate and to destroy." Not a word of this could we find in all his discussion on the subject ; but everywhere he supposes that when the law of God says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," the word "neighbor" embraces all. His words particularly\* are to be attended to. The precept about usury, he says, can be understood, as it is by many authors, so as to establish a difference between countrymen and foreigners ; God as Supreme Lord could grant to the Jews this right over the property of men of other races, whilst he refused it to them with regard to those of their own nation ; but with respect to the law of the "*dilectio proximi*," he says, "It is a false supposition." No distinction is to be made between countrymen and foreigners. The text even of Leviticus,† "Thou shalt love thy *friend* as thyself," was wrongfully interpreted by the *men of old*, when according to St. Matthew they added, "and thou shalt hate thy enemy." The law as given to Moses could not bear such an addition, since the word *amicus* means evidently *proximus*, and must be extended to all, as Christ himself tacitly interpreted it. We have not given here the very words of Suarez, but certainly his meaning.

The consequence of all this discussion is perfectly clear. The Jews not only had a true faith and a true hope, but the law of love, which, according to our Divine Lord himself, contains the law and the prophets, was a paramount duty for the Jews, and was intended by the Saviour to govern and direct their consciences. If false teachers had corrupted it, it was written in all its purity on the tables of stone ; and the Jews in their inmost hearts knew it.

It could be proved by many passages of the historical books of the Old Testament and of the Psalms. We will refer here only to the beautiful episode of the story of Tobias. It is true that in the two first chapters of the book, the good man is reported to have exerted his active benevolence in Nineveh only on those of his own race, apparently ; but the reason of it is plain : those he helped were poorer than the men of the country, being exiled, deprived of their property, and persecuted. Yet not a word is said to intimate that he would have refused to come to the relief of his pagan neighbors, had they needed it and called for the exertion of his charity. But in the in-

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\* *De Leg. Vet. lib. ix. cap. iv. 10.*

† *Lev. xix. 18.*

structions he gave his son at a time he thought he was going to die, every detail goes to prove that he wished young Tobias to be ever charitable to all indiscriminately. Hear a few passages of them : "All the days of thy life, have God in thy mind ; and take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord our God. Give alms of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from *any poor person* ; for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly ; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity. For alms deliver from all sin and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the Most High God to all them that give it. . . . If *any man* hath done any work for thee, immediately pay him his hire, and let not the wages of thy hired servant stay with thee at all. See thou never do to *another* that thou wouldest hate to have done to thee by another. Eat thy bread with the hungry and the needy ; and with thy garments cover the naked. . . . Bless God at all times, and desire of him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in him." In the lines we have not thought proper to transcribe, there is not a word at variance with this beautiful effusion of a most charitable—most Christian—heart. They were omitted merely because they had no direct bearing on the subject. But certainly whenever a father, under our holy dispensation of love, wishes to inculcate to his children the perfect law of charity as preached in the Gospel, he cannot do better than read this 4th chapter of the book of Tobias to his children. And this suffices, we think, to establish a perfect "analogy" between the Old and the New Testaments. Not only the Synagogue as *Ecclesia docens*, but the Synagogue likewise as the *Congregation of the faithful* forms evidently one body with the Christian Church, believing in the same truths and practicing the same commandments, although with very different degrees of grace.

#### 6. *The Jews were united to the Gentiles by the bonds of Love.*

Thus, in the successive ages of human history, the hand of God has always been guiding men in the path of rectitude, and never abandoning them for a single instant to their own wayward thoughts ; for, according to the doctrine of St. Thomas, revelation was neces-

sary—*necessitas fuit*—not only for the many truths which transcend human reason, but even, owing to the consequences of the fall, for the very principles which our intellect, left to itself, can reach. But before concluding this chapter, we are naturally led to make a step further, by considering the Jewish race as having received the high mission of preparing the future universality of the true religion by announcing it, calling for it, and directing the course of events toward it. This will prove beyond contradiction that the Hebrews, instead of being proudly isolated by that exclusiveness and haughtiness which are generally attributed to them, were the first to proclaim the real brotherhood of nations, and to announce the pulling down of all former barriers before the coming messengers of God. We must confine ourselves here to a mere sketch, the following chapters being precisely intended to bring on all the details and the proofs.

And at the outset we are struck with the fact, that the Jews were the first to admit and proclaim the unity of the human family, and to preserve in their sacred records the true derivation of all nations from one pair. All the other races of men, if they ever attempted to write their history, brought the origin of all things to their own first ancestor, and considered other nations as aliens, having no annals, and in fact unworthy to be accounted and esteemed as real men, because of their inferior origin. Thus the proud Brahmin pretended to be born from the mouth of Brahma, whilst the Sudra came only from his feet; every Greek tribe called itself *autochton*, and did not care to account for the birth of other races; the Egyptian computed the first thirty-four thousand years, we believe, of his annals, as the dynasty of the gods, with whom he proudly identified himself; and so of the others. The Jew alone admitted that Abraham, the progenitor of his race, was a mere man, rescued from idolatry by the divine call, and far posterior in time to many patriarchs greater than him, perhaps, although not destined to the same high mission.

But above all must we consider the wonderful fact that the Hebrews firmly held, and preserved forever among mankind, the belief that the human race, originating at first from a single pair, came near to be destroyed by a universal flood, which left only one family alive; that from this family all nations sprung, united at first, fed intellectually with the same holy traditions, until pride brought on their dispersion, and broke off into fragments their unity

as well as their language ; but that the day would come, when One born of the posterity of Abraham would raise again the standard of union, and bring a second time the whole of mankind under its folds.

This belief of the Jews embraces two great events, most striking in human history, and which are every day more and more recognized and demonstrated as our historical knowledge advances, namely, the providential division of mankind at a time very near its second Noachian origin, and its intended reunion by the One the Hebrew books call the Messiah. There cannot be found in the Bible two facts more clearly expressed and announced. The first had already happened when Moses wrote the Pentateuch ; the second is merely foretold in the subsequent records of the Old Testament, and a beginning of fulfillment is already proclaimed in the sacred writings of the New ; a fulfillment which has been constantly developing itself until our times, and which is expressed by this phrase, *the Catholicity of the Church*. The Jews have always had the honor of being the standard-bearers of this belief, and how sensible men can call them narrow-minded, and haters of mankind, when they have always so powerfully insisted on these two facts, is more than we can understand.

This remarkable insistence it is which makes of the Bible the only true Universal History that antiquity has left us. The annals of all the other ancient nations record the mythical origin of each of them. They never attempt to connect their own history with that of other peoples ; and invariably they represent other races, when they speak of them, as enemies, hateful, worthy only of being destroyed. Not so the Jews.

The first of these two great facts places them in the proud position of being in possession of truth in real ethnology, which no other ancient nation possessed in the least degree. They state plainly to mankind : "All nations are derived from the three sons of one man ; and the diversities apparent since that time, among them, are merely the effects of dispersion, the will of God, and perhaps the lapse of ages and climatic differences." They proclaim, with a modest impartiality, that their own tribal existence is a mere atom in that ocean of human waves vibrating from a common center, and reaching gradually the utmost bounds of the earth. They give the names of those nations so different from their own. They exclaim with justice that the entire universe belongs to God ; and if they acknowl-

edge with gratitude that Israel has been treated with a greater kindness than other tribes, they do not refuse to admit, nay, they state openly, that there must be good everywhere, since all races of men are embraced in the merciful designs of Providence, and are destined at some future day to be reunited in one fold. We say "they"—the Jews—although this is true particularly of the books placed into their hands. But were they not commanded to read and meditate upon these books? Were they not made a nation chiefly by the perusal of them? Had not the "word of God" been given them that they might be shaped and fashioned accordingly? They certainly professed to believe everything contained in these volumes; and consequently, for certain, their belief, and, by strict deduction, their inner life, must have been in accordance with what the books contained, with what has been just expressed in this paragraph.

It is true, when, at the end of last century and the beginning of this, men began to study ethnology, which had been altogether neglected, or rather, unknown, before; the first crude researches in that field, carried on by men animated with the unmistakable desire to give the lie to Christianity, brought out results altogether at variance with the statements of Holy Writ. The same has unfortunately happened for all the sciences which are now objects of deep and exhaustive study. But after the labors of those who followed the first inquirers, after the thorough researches of the greatest ethnographers of this age, the 10th chapter of Genesis has to be respected, or the scoffers may look sharply to their own reputation as scientific men; and what was at the same time happening for the study of ancient history, which new discoveries every day brought back to a surprising accord with revealed truth, happened likewise for ethnology, whose various systems could never satisfy a rational mind, unless they were brought within the compass of three or four lines only—as the posterity of Canaan sometimes came to be included in that of Ham, and occasionally remained outside of it. But the division finally adopted in our days, and which seems to be on the way of a future universal acknowledgment, namely, that into the "Aryan," "Semitic," "Hamitic," or "Turanian" families, bears such a close analogy with that of Genesis that our scientific men might perhaps do as well, even for the honor of human reason, to come plainly to the simple statements of the Bible.

Thus the records of the Old Testament have anticipated science, and the Jews could already in ancient times look on other races not

only with impartiality, but with a feeling akin to that of brothers, as descended also from their own ancestors. But the second part of their belief on this subject is yet more important to prove the real enlightenment of the Hebrew mind, and requires from us some special reflections. This refers to that conviction so clearly expressed in many pages of the Old Testament, that the intricate division of men, so fatal to their happiness and culture, would be one day healed up by the coming of Him "who was to be sent." So that, among the Jews, the promise of a Messiah was most intimately connected with that of a universal brotherhood among mankind; and—this brotherhood bearing closely a religious character—with what we call the Catholic Church.

It is truly remarkable, and by itself it would prove the divine origin of Christianity, that the despised Jews, alone, of all nations, announced pointedly from the beginning of their existence that "all races would be blessed" in One born among them; that their whole national life would consist in preparing his coming; that the kingdom of God, not being any longer restricted within the narrow compass of their diminutive nation, would spread everywhere, and make true children of Abraham, according to grace, out of the most different—nay, opposite—ethnical elements. Had this been stated in one or two phrases only of an extensive compilation, embracing works of many authors, it would have been truly surprising; and supposing its fulfillment in after times, it would certainly have sufficed for conviction with all fair-minded men; but as it is repeated, in the same or equivalent terms, in many passages, on many important occasions, even the skeptic or unbeliever must admit that the phenomenon is most strange, and deserves to be attentively studied. We intend to come back to the subject *ex professo*; here we merely allude to the strangeness of the fact that the Hebrews professed, all along, this to be their intimate belief! Still, they have been called self-conceited and narrow-minded; they have been accused of rejecting behind them as profane, with all the determination of their clenched hands and closed hearts, all men who could not show in their veins the blood of the great Hebrew patriarch! Could those who pretend it have read the Old Testament?

But it is said with truth, "when the time came to prove their belief by their acts, to open their arms, and embrace all nations which then rushed in suddenly at the first preaching of the Gospel, they refused to acknowledge what all their prophets had announced, and

turned their backs on the Gentiles, whom they would not recognize as their brethren."

Many of them did so, unfortunately, because they would not see in Jesus Christ the Messiah promised to them. Christ could not be separated from his Church ; to reject him was to reject her. The Old Testament always promised him and her at the same time. This is not the place to examine the deplorable causes of their obstinacy and temporary rejection. But whatever these causes may have been, the fact remains as stated ; and the Old Testament, which they keep yet and continue to read, with "a vail on their heart," as St. Paul says, attests still that such has always been, and such must be, the faith of the nation, if they wish to remain the followers of Moses and the prophets.

Strange indeed that the Jews should have been thus the proclaimers of a future Catholicity ! It has been said that the fact is unique in the history of all nations. Some might pretend that Rome also gave to the world the spectacle of an analogous belief. In the opinion of true Romans their city was to be "eternal," and enjoy a "universal" sway over all nations. But evidently this was a mere delusion of pride, totally unlike the conviction of the Jews. The hope of "eternity" which the Romans put forth had no other foundation than the idea of their superiority, which they thought would last forever ; and as to the "universal" sway they promised to themselves, it was that of a proconsul over a conquered province, or of a rapacious eagle over the affrighted dove. They spoke of "peace," and in their prolonged existence of many centuries, they closed the temple of Janus only twice. St. Augustine has well described them in his *City of God* ; and we all know what became of their eternity, and how finally culminated their universal sway. But among the Jews the promise of the One who was to be sent, and of the nations coming willingly to be "blessed" by him, is of such a different character from the eternity and sway of Rome, that it may well continue to be maintained that such prophecies are of a totally unique character, independently of the fact that they have been fulfilled, or rather continue to be fulfilled, every day under our eyes. But of this the reader will be more thoroughly convinced by perusing the following chapters.

## CHAPTER II.

THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH ANNOUNCED AND PREPARED BY THE  
INSPIRED WRITERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.1. *Two distinct characters in the books of the Old Testament.*

THERE are two great features in the books of the Old Testament which must be closely examined, and placed as much as possible in juxtaposition, in order to arrive at a more satisfactory knowledge of what is for many a puzzle—namely, the Jewish people's nature and mission. The first is a number of strict prescriptions given textually in the Mosaic law, and carried out faithfully in the subsequent facts of history, by which the Hebrew nation was made a peculiar people; separated purposely from all others; forbidden, in many cases, even social intercourse with them; and kept in constant dread of the divine wrath, in case it forgot the “sanctity” of its position.\* The second, of a different, nay, seemingly opposite character, consists in repeated statements that the blessings bestowed on Israel would be imparted likewise to all other nations; that one of the posterity of Abraham would be the hope of the whole world; † that the entire earth would sing the praises of the true God, and children of the patriarch, according to grace, would be brought to a new Jerusalem from the most distant regions of the globe, and share together with the Jews the blessings of the true religion.

Those who consider the Hebrew people only under the first of these two aspects, are apt to represent them as morose, unsociable, and hateful. Under this point of view were they looked at in ancient times by the Romans, and in our days they are thus invariably depicted by Voltaire and his followers. But any one claiming impartiality of judgment as to the character of this nation, must at least examine if the second trait did not considerably modify the first. For it is undeniable that every faithful Jew read

\* Num. xxiii. 9, etc.

† Agg. ii. 8.

often the pages of his sacred books, where he could not but see not only the primitive union of all nations under the patriarchal rule, derived from the same origin, and sharing for many ages together the same destinies ; but likewise the brilliant promises of a far happier time to come, when all the races of mankind would be again united, and form, as it were, one family.

And these encouraging assurances were always connected with their faith in the Messiah ; for invariably in the Old Testament the promise of the one accompanies that of the other, and as nothing could be more pleasant to them than their aspirations toward the great Deliverer, nothing also could be more flattering than the hope of the future union of all mankind, with which they felt sure they would come, at some future day, in a happy companionship.

### 2. *First prophecies from Abraham down to Moses.*

It was at the very moment Abraham was chosen to be the father of that race, so peculiar in its customs, so distinct from all other nations, so tenacious of its heteroclite propensities, that the assurance was first uttered by Heaven, “ In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,” \* or, as it is expressed in Gen. xii. 3, “ In thee shall all the kindred of the earth be blessed.” † But the consideration which must particularly attract our attention is, that whatever words are used in the passages just quoted, it is surely question of all the nations of the world as distinct from the Jews ; and the promise is made that the time would come when all races of men would share in the blessing bestowed at first on the posterity of Abraham. It is, therefore, the first clear prediction that the future religion, destined to replace the particular covenant made later on with the Jews, would be universal, or, as we say, Catholic ; and that this great boon

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\* Gen. xxii. 18.

† The Hebrew words translated in the Vulgate by *gentes* and *cognationes* are rendered in the Septuagint version by  $\xi\sigma\nu\eta$  and  $\varphi\upsilon\lambda\alpha\iota$  ; the Greek word  $\xi\sigma\nu\oslash$  means certainly a nation—*gens* in Latin ; and the word  $\varphi\upsilon\lambda\eta\acute{\iota}$  means a tribe, literally translated by the word *cognatio* in Latin. In the time of Abraham most nations were certainly tribes or clans, in which consanguinity determined all the social institutions ; thus both words could be interchanged and used at pleasure ; *gens* besides, in Latin, means a family as well as a nation ; and thus we are brought back by all the grammatical roads to the starting-point of human society—the patriarchal system.

would be conferred on the nations through Christ, since St. Paul precisely remarked it when speaking of this passage of Genesis. \*

It is very remarkable that the same promise was repeated to Isaac, after the death of Abraham, † and to Jacob after the demise of his father Isaac. ‡ On all those occasions a double announcement was made to the three patriarchs : firstly, the assurance that their lineal posterity would possess the land of Canaan, in which they were themselves strangers ; and secondly, the positive prediction that “ all nations ” should be blessed in “ One ” of their posterity. There can be, therefore, no possible doubt about the sense of the text, which would surely be pronounced as uncertain in its meaning, if found only once in the sacred record ; and the explanation of it by St. Paul, as given above, precludes the necessity, or even the propriety, of insisting any longer on it.

But another passage of Genesis, expressing the same thought in somewhat different terms, is so full of appropriateness to the present purpose, that before dismissing this subject, we must refer to it as briefly as possible, keeping its importance in view. It is the significant phrase of Jacob to Judah, one of his twelve children, when blessing them before his death ; he foretells of *Siloh* (one of his posterity) that “ He shall be the expectation of nations.” §

We have not to discuss the meaning of the word “ Siloh.” Catholic expositors have proved beyond doubt that Jacob here speaks of the Messiah, “ *He who is to be sent.* ” The old Hebrews understood it as we do ; but modern Rabbis have endeavored to escape the cogency of this prophecy so ruinous to their hopes ; and many of them explain it of David, as they, unfortunately for themselves, refuse to acknowledge Christ. It is needless to add that some recent non-Catholic expositors side rather with Jewish than with other Christian interpreters. But we cannot enter into the long controversy. Our actual concern regards only the solemn declaration, “ He will be the expectation of nations,” which is undeniably in the text understood of “ Siloh.” This simple proposition, as nearly all other Hebrew phrases taken at random in the Old Testament, can have a number of meanings ; but, most strange to say, none here which does not tally with the idea of the future Universal Church extend-

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\* *Abrahæ dictæ sunt promissiones, et semini ejus. Non dicit et seminibus, quasi in multis ; sed quasi in uno ; et semini tuo, qui est Christus.*”—Ad Gal. iii. 16.      † Gen. xxvi. 4.      ‡ Gen. xxviii. 14.      § Gen. xlix. 10.

ing to all nations. Consequently there can be no possibility of a controversy on this phrase.

That nearly all Hebrew texts can have several meanings is the great source of diversity in the interpretation of the Old Testament, and by itself alone proves the necessity of a final judge with respect to the true sense. This is caused by the very construction of the Hebrew language, in which there are really no vowels, and all the letters are in fact true consonants; but as vowels are absolutely necessary for the pronunciation of any language, all must admit that there were of necessity *conventional* vowels in pronouncing the Hebrew in old times. The question merely is for us, What were they? The masoretic points, inflections, transversions, etc., are a comparatively modern invention, and prove, in fact, so little reliable that all genuine Hebrew scholars refuse to employ them, and never quote the text with their help. The consequence is, that since all Hebrew scholars cannot agree on the way of pronouncing the text, and use, in fact, different inflections, the meaning of many phrases remains uncertain, and different interpretations become allowable. We have no hesitation to say, that if the Septuagint, and chiefly the Vulgate version, had not been transmitted to us by the Church, together with the original text, it would be now absolutely impossible to understand the Hebrew, unless we could trust implicitly the masoretic scholars, which, unfortunately, is not the case, as they themselves relied on the Talmudists.

But as the positive assertion contained in the prophecy of Jacob to Judah, namely, that the Messiah (Siloh) would be "the expectation of nations," is of extreme importance, it luckily turns out that *all* the meanings which in the Hebrew can be given to the phrase are acceptable to the Christian, and prove the undoubtful object of the seer. It suffices to refer the reader to the commentary of Cornelius a Lapide.

Long before Moses, therefore, the posterity of Abraham knew that they would not remain forever in the isolation God wished to place them in for a time; but, on the contrary, their destiny would be linked, in some way yet unknown to them, with that of *all* other races, so that it would not be a kind of alliance with some of the powerful nations destined to leave their mark in the future history of the world, but a companionship with *all*, without exception. This must have entered deeply into their traditions. For the promise having been repeated so many different times, from the

first coming of Abraham in Palestine down to their migration into Egypt, the history of all their patriarchs, one after the other, brought the fact most vividly before their mind ; and when Moses collected those traditions and wrote them down in the book of Genesis, the most remarkable part of their previous history was precisely the hope instilled into their hearts by so many divine utterances of the same identical character.

### 3. *The prophecy of Balaam.*

But although the great Hebrew lawgiver consigned those promises in the Pentateuch, it did not belong to his office to add to them anything of his own. His duty was, on the contrary, to insist on the principle of isolation, which was to be the only sure safeguard of his people against the universally prevailing idolatry. It is not, therefore, surprising that nothing can be found in the words of Moses himself concerning the future blessing of all races of men. In the sublime canticle recorded in Deuteronomy xxxii. there is only a word \* calling on the nations to praise the "people" of God, and in the Septuagint version the text is rendered somewhat differently, so as to establish a kind of connection between both. The sense, however, is at best obscure, and it is preferable not to use it for the present purpose.

But Moses himself has given us, in the history of Balaam, and his prophecy, a far more brilliant insight into the subject of the present inquiry, and it is important to look more closely into it.

Balac, King of Moab, has called from Mesopotamia the seer known then all over the Orient, in order to curse the Israelites at the moment of entering into the land of Canaan. Three times Balaam refuses to curse, but instead pours down magnificent blessings on the nation spread before his view, and he closes the splendid imagery of his words, containing all the promises already made to the Hebrew patriarchs, by the following utterances : "I shall see him, but not now ; I shall behold him, but not near. A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel ; and he shall strike the chiefs of Moab, and he shall waste all the children of Seth. And he shall possess Edom, the inheritance of Seir, his enemy" (this last phrase is given according to the Septuagint). "Israel shall do manfully. Out of Jacob shall he come that shall rule ; and he

shall destroy the remains of the city." And after some details concerning the Amalekites, the Cineans, and the Assyrians, Balaam concludes : " Alas, who shall live when God shall do these things ? They shall come in galleys from Italy : they shall overcome the Assyrians, and shall waste the Hebrews ; and at last they themselves also shall perish."

There is undoubtedly a serious difficulty to reach a proper understanding of these words, and of those which precede them. This arises chiefly from the obscurity of the Hebrew text ; the late remarks on the subject are yet fresh in the mind of the reader. The Septuagint version differs considerably from the Vulgate, and all modern Hebrew scholars disagree about the meaning of many important expressions. No one can say in fact what was the original reading indited by Moses. Yet some general remarks may enable us to come to a positive conclusion, and to find here, in truth, merely a repetition, with many more details, of the patriarchal promises which have occupied us so far.

First, therefore, it has been suggested by some interpreter of these biblical utterances whose name escapes us—but his name is of no moment—that when Balaam is said to "assume his parable"—*assumens parabolam*—the meaning is not, as many suppose, that he is going to speak in poetical language, and use a metaphorical style ; but that he is in fact "opening his mouth in parables," as the Gospel has it ; that is to say, under the vail of a proximate object presented to his hearers for attracting their attention, he intends to unfold before them a much more important one—a truth which he means to convey. Thus, when our Lord speaks of "a grain of mustard-seed which from an humble plant becomes, by growth, a large tree in whose branches the birds of the air build their nest," his object is certainly to describe the development of his Church, from an imperceptible beginning to an expansion co-extensive with the earth itself. In the same manner the seer of Aram, called by Balac to curse the Hebrews, sees not only the "tents of Israel" spread before him in the plain below, but looks afar and discovers beyond another Israel, far superior to the first in beauty and in strength, namely, the future universal Church. This is manifest from many passages of the prophecy. In general it is too magnificent to comprise only the future destinies of the Jewish people. The modern Rabbis, it is true, say the prophet refers to the subsequent reign of David ; but "the reign of David," capped with that of Solomon himself, never deserved

to be described in such glowing colors, chiefly when the whole "glory" of Solomon was to pass away so rapidly, and end in the ignominy of his harems and of his idolatrous altars. Many events besides are foretold in the last passage just quoted, which cannot be referred to the epoch of the two great Hebrew monarchs. If David conquered the Amalekites mentioned in Balaam's prophecy, neither he nor his son had anything to do with the destruction of the Assyrian empire, nor with the galleys from Italy, as St. Jerome translated in the Vulgate the "kittim" of the Hebrew text. But, worst of all, how could the prophet who resisted so manfully, constantly, and successfully the ardent desire of Balac that he should "curse" the Hebrews, foretell at the end that the people coming "in galleys from Italy" should "waste the Hebrews," and "at last they themselves should perish"? Had not the King of Moab all he wished in this last utterance of the Mesopotamian wizard?

These remarks go certainly to prove that the prophecies under consideration were real parables, and announced, under the emblem of the Israelites coming from Egypt, and at the moment of entering the promised land, another far superior society, namely, that of true "Israelites," "children of Abraham according to promise," who were at some future day to come out of the darkness of idolatry, and enter the brilliant kingdom of God on earth—that is, the Gentiles henceforth converted, and forming the future universal and everlasting Church.

To become convinced that such is really the case with respect to those most remarkable and sublime effusions of the prophetic spirit, they must be compared with the promises made previously to the patriarchs, so as to show the identity of both; with the only difference that the last are considerably more developed than the first, and begin to introduce us to the special knowledge of ancient nations, and thus give us the first inkling of the view under which our intention is to study Catholicity; since we examine the Church confronting the world, considered ethnologically.

In the previous references to the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah, no mention occurred of various circumstances or texts of Scripture to which allusions must be made here; but all well-informed readers who know the Bible must be acquainted with them, or at any rate a hasty glance on Genesis will easily supply the deficiency. In the various *parables* of Balaam the identical words are found which were already uttered to the patriarchs: "He

that blesseth thee shall also be blessed ; he that curseth thee shall be reckoned accursed.”\* The words of Balaam, “Who can count the dust of Jacob, and know the number of the stock of Israel ?”† are the almost exact reproduction of the promise of God to Abraham that his posterity should be as numerous as the grains of sand in the sea ; only the *promise* has been fulfilled, and is acknowledged as accomplished by the seer of Mesopotamia. Judah had been depicted by his father Jacob in the following glowing words : “Thou hast couched as a lion and as a lioness ; who shall rouse him ?”‡ The very same words are applied by Balaam to the posterity of Jacob, at the moment of their entering into Palestine.§ Finally, and this last token of identity would alone suffice, the One promised to the patriarchs, and *Siloh*, announced as the one to be sent in the prophecy of Jacob, is the Messiah, the future Christ, as all sensible men must admit. The same is true of the star and of the scepter mentioned in the last *parable* of Balaam,|| and chiefly of the remarkable phrase, “Out of Jacob shall *he* come that shall rule.”

It is true modern Rabbis apply these phrases only to David ; but the previous remark holds good ; David never fulfilled all that was foretold of Siloh, nor of the “star” and the “scepter” mentioned by Balaam ; and the ancient Jews understood those various passages as we do, of the Messiah. Onkelos, a rabbi of the first age of our era, a contemporary of Christ and of St. Paul, is precise on the prophecy now under consideration.

People, moreover, are aware that the prediction of the star was in all likelihood that which brought the “wise men” from Chaldea or Mesopotamia to the feet of Christ. The most ancient Fathers of the Church are unanimous on the subject. Many have believed—the tradition is a respectable one—that the wise men were in fact of the posterity of Balaam ; and that they were waiting for the fulfillment of the oracle, as the time had arrived described in all the other details given by the seer. The tribes of Palestine mentioned by him—the Amalekites, Cineans, Edomites,—had disappeared ; the Assyrian empire had long before been destroyed ; the “galleys from Italy” were at the time sweeping all the seas along the Asiatic coast, and the power of the “Hebrews,” already on the wane, would not long stand in the face of the power of Rome ; the brilliant orb suddenly

\* Num. xxiv. 9.

§ Num. xxiv. 9.

† Num. xxiii. 10.

|| V. 17.

‡ Gen. xlvi. 9.

glowing over the west was the last sign of the appearance of the true "King of the Jews" and of the world ; and thus, full of faith, they left their country, bringing with them "frankincense, and gold, and myrrh."

It is true this surprising oracle of God, if examined too hastily, seems to announce that the one who is to come shall kill, and waste, and destroy, when on the contrary we know that he is to be "the Prince of Peace." But a slightly closer inspection will convince the reader that the difficulty is not serious. First, in the intent of Balaam himself it could not be so. The futurity disclosed to his eyes is so bright and peaceful that all the expressions calculated to soothe and please the imagination and the heart are brought forward crowded in his imagery, the same as in the sweet scenes of husbandry on the shield of Achilles, according to Homer. "How beautiful are thy tents, O Jacob ! and thy pavilions, O Israel ! as umbrageous valleys, as gardens bedewed by moisture along streams, as cedars plunging their roots in the wet banks of a river, as tabernacles immovably fixed by the hand of the Lord !" Can this be a world devastated by war, wasted and ruined by a ruthless conqueror ? If the intention of the prophet had really been to describe scenes of devastation and plunder and crime, would he have exclaimed, "I will see him, but alas, not soon enough,—*non modo*—I will look at him, but at too great a distance—*non prope*" ? Should he have bewailed his fate that he would die long before these things should happen ?

What did he mean, therefore, when he spoke of "wasting" and "destroying" ? There are two ways of removing this slight difficulty. First, Christ would be indeed "the Prince of Peace," and would establish on earth the reign of charity and of virtue ; but he would begin by warring against vice, error, idolatry, all the moral and social evils which afflicted mankind ; and the war thus inaugurated would end in victory, and thus the reign of Satan would come to an end. Second, If in some passages of the prophecy the one announced as a "star," as a "scepter"—*virga*—is to "waste" idolatrous temples, "to destroy" the power of error, so that the monotheism of the Jews—among whom there was no "idol," as the same seer declared—would spread everywhere, and establish all over the earth the worship of the true God ; if, on this account, the future Messiah is represented as a "conqueror," nay a "destroyer," there are other prophetic announcements in the words of Balaam, where the destruction of empires and of peoples is foretold, yet not as

brought forth by Christ, but only succeeding each other until his coming. They are to be considered in the same light as the sequence of history prophesied by Daniel, in order to point out the time of the appearance of the great Deliverer. And in this respect Balaam's inspirations are indeed wonderful, and at the same time extremely instructive with respect to ethnology. They are far, indeed, from being as precise, as detailed, and as full, as the predictions of the young Hebrew captive in Babylonia; but considering the time in which they were uttered, and even the epoch when Moses reduced them to writing, they are undoubtedly as astonishing and admirable as those of him who explained the *Mene, Thekel, Phares*. They speak of several important tribes existing then on the southern and eastern borders of Palestine, of the great empire of Chaldea, of the future expansion of Greece and Rome, and finally, of the last days of Judea as a nation. We begin to perceive one of the great features of the Old Testament, which does not relate only the events of the national life of the Hebrews, but embraces in its vast compass the whole of mankind as it then was and *as it was to be*. For that great book contains the destinies and the hopes of the human race, as well as, and more than, mere scraps of Jewish history. On this account it must be considered as the first and most reliable book on ancient ethnology. It is, therefore, but natural that by degrees, as the prejudices of scientists diminish, as their knowledge and impartiality increase, ethnographers are coming nearer and nearer to the historical, ethnological, and social truths contained in the Bible. In the last fifteen or twenty years the progress in this regard has been most remarkable; and Christians may yet see the day, in a near future, when, the sober and complete observations of scientists agreeing at last fully with the statements of our sacred records, a final conviction on the subject will be reached, and the great mystery obscuring yet the truth, with respect to the races of men, will be at last unveiled.

But what is still more worthy the reader's attention at this moment, because more appropriate to the present subject, is, that as the belief in the unity of the human family becomes more firmly established by these studies—and in our day nearly all men are finally agreed on this point—the possibility and desirableness of one and the same religion for mankind will be more readily admitted, and the real intent of the character of universality in the Church more fully proved to a great number of men who hesitate to receive this truth, if they do not reject it as impossible.

The purport of these considerations is to demonstrate the adaptability of a universal religion to the leanings of all possible races, in opposition to those who pretend that Christianity has never been, and is not now, acceptable to any nations but to some branches of the Aryan stock. The clear prediction of the contrary is a proof which few men can gainsay, when it must be evident that no human foresight could insinuate at the time the least hope of it; considering particularly all the details of this prediction, and the circumstances which surrounded it.

It was natural that Balaam's prophecy should bring this thought to our mind, and its expression under our pen; since the oracular announcement is worded in such a manner, in bringing together many tribes and nations of very different races, and presenting them as at war with each other, and destroying empires and republics, that the main object, kept constantly in view by the seer, is the establishment of a universal spiritual kingdom, receiving in its bosom, and shaping and molding into *one* great moral individuality "all the remains of the city," after idolatry has been destroyed in it.\* For, it must not be forgotten that the Messiah is to *destroy* error and sin, before establishing his kingdom, as described in verses fifth and sixth. And let us remark it incidentally: it is a positive fact that at this moment there are Catholics belonging to very nearly all *present* and previous races of men, in the old and the new world.

We, therefore, see already, long before Christ himself appeared, the Amalekites, these first enemies of Israel, at the very moment the Hebrews came out of Egypt; the Cineans, perched on their inaccessible rocks on the northeast of Idumæa; the Assyrians, of whose chief cities the remains fill now the European museums of archaeology; finally, the Greeks and Romans, with their galleys, so well known in our times—we see all that ancient world, having no other destiny, in the eyes of the prophets of God, but to war against each other, in order finally to succumb to the true Church of Christ, by giving some at least of their posterity to the guidance of the "star" of Bethlehem, and to the rule of the "scepter" of Jacob.

#### 4. *Prophecy of Tobias.*

Before proceeding to the consideration of the brilliant utterances of the prophets, properly so called, from David to Malachi, it is im-

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\* Num. xxiv. 19.

portant to dwell a moment on the anecdotic and biographic book of Tobias, whose thirteenth chapter contains a wonderful effusion of the most sublime poetry. The book itself is contained in the canon recognized by the Catholic Church ; and a word will be said presently to prove that modern rationalists are not justified in rejecting it. But the importance of this chapter consists in this, that Tobias, being not himself a prophet, but a simple, ordinary man, fearing God and loving his neighbor, has nevertheless transmitted to us a page as glowing as any of those of Isaias. It will consequently prove that the knowledge possessed by the Jews of a future kingdom of God, extending over the whole earth, was not confined to those super-human personages whose individuality partakes to a certain degree of the majesty of God, by the vastness of their conceptions and the awful grandeur of their lives ; but that every pious and sincere Israelite, in his religious thoughts and devotions, was naturally brought to the consideration of that magnificent subject. This feature of the short book of Tobias becomes more striking still from the general scope of the work. For it is altogether a homely description of the life of a good and pious man. Lessons of a heroic virtue are indeed indicated in it ; but always in a simple and idyllic manner. Thus probity, piety, conjugal and filial affection, shine in all its pages ; the sanctity of marriage, the efficacy of prayer, the sweetest effusion of charity for all, the providence of God for the righteous, the holy ministrations of angels, and the malicious wickedness of demons, are portrayed in such attractive colors as to win the heart, and delight the understanding. Everything is so simple, natural, homely, that when the reader comes to the two last chapters, he is surprised at once at the change of tone, and the sublimity of description. The old man suddenly becomes a prophet. He has not only recovered his bodily sight by the good office of an angel ; but the Spirit of God himself opens the eyes of his soul, and takes him up directly over the clouds, to show him the earth as it is and as it shall be ; the miseries of actual captivity changed into the happiness of a future triumph ; a triumph for the Jews, in which all the nations shall partake, and which will make one family of all mankind. The former captive, who had so often gone out at night to gather up from the streets of Nineveh the corpses of his murdered countrymen and give them a decent burial ; the simple man, who had to hide himself from the persecuting fury of Sennacherib, and lost the use of his eyes in the holy pursuit of his charity, is transformed into

an inspired seer, looking farther into futurity than most of the other Hebrew prophets. For he saw not only the present, but the past, and the future, as far as eternity itself. The oracles uttered by his lips resume, in fact, those which Moses had recorded indeed, but which were again revealed to Tobias ; and from that view of the past they expand into the vast prophetic field where most of the great seers, living at the same time with him, culled the immortal blossoms they have left us. It looks, in fact, as if by his mouth the sublime Isaias was yet speaking ; it is really the same subject, namely, the description of the future Church, with the same noble imagery and unapproachable grandeur of thought. But the old exiled captive goes still further ; and at the end of his divine song he anticipates John of Patmos himself, and writes, like the future beloved disciple, of the heavenly Jerusalem, and the glorious congregation of the saints in the celestial city.

To prove that all this is a sober fact, untainted with any exaggeration, and free from any flight of fancy, the only thing required is to render the very words of the prophecy, known certainly to all modern readers, but perhaps not sufficiently appreciated by some of them. There is no need of vindicating the text from the rash comments of modern exegetists. The Chaldean version, out of which St. Jerome wrote the book of Tobias in the Vulgate, is undoubtedly far preferable to any Greek text ; and the Catholic Church having adopted it, is responsible for its genuineness. No part of the Bible would remain intact, if it were not for the authority of the Church ; and if the common canons of criticism adopted by some rash writers of our day were to prevail, no part whatever of Holy Writ would resist the dissolvent. It is precisely such a book as the one under review that would have to be abandoned among the first, although undoubtedly there is scarcely any portion of the Old Testament, of the same extent, more helpful to morality, more redolent of the true Christian spirit by a kind of anticipation. But it is time to introduce a few quotations.\*

“Bless ye the Lord, all his elect ; keep days of joy, and give glory to him.

“Jerusalem, city of God, the Lord hath chastised thee for the works of thy hands.

“Give glory to the Lord for thy good things, and bless the God

eternal, that he may rebuild his tabernacle in thee, and may call back all the captives to thee, and thou mayest rejoice forever and ever.

“Thou shalt shine with a glorious light ; and *all the ends of the earth* shall worship thee.

“*Nations from afar shall come to thee, and shall bring gifts, and shall adore the Lord in thee, and shall esteem thy land as holy.*

“*For they shall call upon the great name in thee.*

“*They shall be cursed that shall despise thee ; and they shall be condemned that shall blaspheme thee ; and blessed shall they be that shall build thee up.*

“But thou shalt rejoice in thy children, because they shall all be blessed, and shall be gathered together to the Lord.

“Blessed are they that love thee, and that rejoice in thy peace.

“My soul, bless thou the Lord, because the Lord, our God, hath delivered Jerusalem, his city, from all her troubles.

“*Happy shall I be if there shall remain of my seed to see the glory of Jerusalem.*

“The gates of Jerusalem shall be built of sapphire, and of emerald, and all the walls thereof round about of precious stone.

“*All its streets shall be paved of white and clean stone ; and Alleluia shall be sung in its streets.*

“Blessed be the Lord who hath exalted it ; and may he reign over it forever and ever. Amen.”

There are in this glorious song evident references to the past and the future. There is a clear repetition of the previous prophecies of Isaac, Jacob, and Balaam : “They shall be cursed that shall despise thee,” etc. ; and there is likewise an evident analogy to the utterances of Isaias : “Nations from afar shall come to thee,” etc. ; and even to the splendid description of the heavenly Jerusalem, by St. John : “The gates of Jerusalem,” etc.

The fact is so striking that some critics have pretended that the book was written by a Christian of the third or fourth century ; as if St. Jerome would not have known it in his time, had it been so. He said himself that it had been kept by the Jews among their “hagiographa,” because it was written, or became known, after Esdras had closed the canon of the old Hebrew Scriptures ; and consequently the reference to the future Apocalypse is most remarkable and astonishing.

The nations destined, according to the prophecy, to come to Jeru-

salem, bringing gifts, are not named ; but it is expressly said of them that, "all the ends of the earth shall worship thee ;" . . . that "they shall esteem thy land as holy ;" for "they shall call upon the great name in thee." If this is not a clear prediction of the exalted dispositions which have always actuated Christians of every nation under the sun, when they are permitted to visit the holy places, we do not see how the fact could have been foretold in more express terms. Whoever has, in past ages, and in our time, traveled to Jerusalem with the spirit of a Christian, has surely felt it the first need of his heart, on entering the gates of the city, to "worship" or honor her ; he has invariably called the country itself the "holy" land ; and he has at the same moment invoked "the great Name" so closely associated with the place, namely, Jesus Christ our Lord. Were these words of Tobias written apart from the remaining portion of his prophecy, and handed over to every pilgrim at the first sight he enjoyed of Jerusalem, he would surely press the paper to his heart, and say emphatically, "These are my feelings, and for this did I come from my distant native country."

Yet although there are many reasons for placing Tobias among the prophets, the work bearing his name is not generally numbered among the prophetic books ; but the natural train of our thoughts has finally brought us to the consideration of this most important part of the Old Testament, in which the future Catholicity of the Church is described almost as faithfully as the realization we ourselves witness places vividly the exact representation before our eyes.

### 5. *A few words on the prophetic spirit.*

Some remarks on the gift of prophecy among the Jews, and on the chief characteristics of the "prophets" will clear the way for the reader, and explain several things which would otherwise interrupt afterward the narrative.

The prediction of future events is not a prophecy, when an acute mind draws conclusions from present facts, and infers what shall be from what is ; but when the event which is announced can have visibly no connection with the present, and particularly when it seems to be in contradiction with what is actually known, no greater proof of a divine revelation can be given, since God alone knows perfectly the future, and can foretell it to whomsoever he chooses. That there have been men invested with that supernatural gift no

one can deny who has read attentively the Old and New Testaments. Our divine Lord was undoubtedly the greatest of them. It is true that the most sublime utterances of this kind contained in the sacred records have been explained away by pretended exegetists, chiefly of our time ; so as to make it appear that divine revelation had nothing to do with them, and the whole could be ascribed to a kind of divination at random, to those vague aspirations toward the future which are natural to man in all ages and countries. But it is known likewise that this “explaining away” of the Jewish prophecies has been far from being “a success,” and that all the attempts made until our day to give a satisfactory explanation of the stupendous fact have been in truth complete failures ; and this not being the place to enter into a full discussion of the subject, a single remark will suffice, and secure to the prophecies of the old law the divine authority which is really theirs. Christ our Lord has spoken of them as of divine utterances ; he has repeatedly alluded to them as announcing him and his mission ; he has professed to have come into the world to fulfill them, and has pointed out many facts of his life as intended to realize what has been announced ; and his beloved disciple, John, has not failed to record his last word : “It is consummated,” as referring to the accomplishing in his divine person of all that the seers of Judea had predicted. Thus, to “explain away” these prophecies, is to “explain away” Christ ; and the exegetist bold enough to profess that he means to do the first, must at the same time answer like Strauss to the question, “Are we Christians ?” by the fearful avowal, “We are not.”

The fact is that it is mainly by the prophecies that the analogy between the two dispensations is made manifest and satisfactory. Take them away, and the whole divine plan unfolded in our holy Scriptures becomes obscure and uncertain. And, reciprocally, the brightness of the truth of Christianity is reflected back on the prophetic promises by which it was heralded ; and whoever believes intelligently in Christ and his Church, must admit first their previous announcement. Then everything becomes clear ; and the divine oracles handed over to us from the most primitive times, all along the intervening series of ages, become precise, almost biographic and anecdotic. Thus the word of St. Jerome, so graphic, and so appropriate to our present object—that Isaias was in truth an evangelist—becomes a perfect expression of an evident truth. Thus it is seen that there is nothing vapory, vague, ill-defined, in the prophecies of

the old law, as many modern German exegetists would have us believe ; but, on the contrary, history is clearly anticipated in those former oracles, and the divine plan, from the beginning of the world to its last day, becomes a bright chain of events, contained at first, from eternity, in the omniscience of God, and gradually unfolded under the astonished and admiring eyes of the believer.

There are, no doubt, in Holy Writ many predictions having only reference to some particular events, unconnected with general history, except as facts of a very secondary importance ; and the interpreters of Holy Scripture never fail to show how literally they have been subsequently accomplished. But the kind of " prophecy " of which we speak here *ex professo*, is mainly the grander one by which the record of the destinies of mankind is magnificently unfolded, and gloriously placed before our eyes. Christ is thus made the center of human social life ; and the Church looms up as a society dear to God, co-extensive with our race, born first in paradise, and destined to exist till the last day. The convictions of the Christian become thus a holy and unattackable belief ; his eyes are opened to see and his intellect awakened to understand, the whole plan of God as revealed in history.

After the seers of the Old Testament, Christ has condescended to be himself a " Prophet "—the one, no doubt, foretold by Moses in Deuteronomy—and has plainly told us, with a firm assertion calculated to create in us a positive assurance, the chief events of the life of mankind, a portion of which has already been accomplished, as the rest shall surely be. Thus, the unbelief and dispersion of the Jews, the destruction of their city and Temple, the conversion of the Gentiles, the ever-renewed and never-to-end persecutions against the Church, her indestructibility and infallibility, the propagation of the Gospel to the uttermost bounds of the earth, and finally, the last catastrophe of our globe, which is to happen at a time unknown to all except to God alone, all this has been clearly foretold by Christ.

We understand by this the chief object of what is called " prophecy ;" but a word more must be said on the character of the prophets themselves.

Although their mission extended to all times and all races, since both were included in the object of their office, yet they had a particular call to fulfill with respect to the Jews, to whose special race they belonged. This must be looked to for a moment. They were

not necessarily priests, or even Levites ; individuals of other tribes than that of Levi were often inspired. Thus it happened frequently that men on whom the Spirit of God had truly descended could not perform any public function of the priesthood, nor appear in the Temple clothed in sacerdotal robes, and holding in their hands the fuming censer or the various sacrificial utensils.

Again, their office was not to publish a new divine law ; and indeed they were far inferior to Moses. But they were to be, first, the firm upholders of the law already promulgated by the great legislator ; second, the heralds of the oracles of God with respect to futurity.

As upholders of the law of God, they re-asserted it and explained it ; and threatened with the divine wrath those who refused to obey it. But they must be considered particularly in the second capacity, as appointed to proclaim the divine oracles with respect to future events. To this function above all is attached the name of prophets. That holy office regarded principally the Jews to whom they spoke ; although ultimately all mankind has profited by them, since the time of what is called the vocation of the Gentiles. But until the coming of Christ scarcely any one except the Jews could read or understand those oracles, and derive any benefit from them. The little of it the others could hear was due merely to their intercourse with the Jewish nation.

Thus the prophets spoke first to and for the Israelites ; and at all times we see them invested with a grand national character ; the leaders, in fact, of the race, although by their office itself they were neither kings nor priests. In a theocracy like that of the Hebrews they had in reality a political character. They looked to the temporal as well as to the spiritual welfare of the nation ; and thus they spoke with authority, not only when the danger of idolatry, or idolatry itself, inflamed their zeal ; but they likewise reproved the rulers or the people whenever some measure was adopted, or on the point of being adopted, injurious to the temporal prospects of the nation. The political alliances of the Hebrew commonwealth were thus often the subject of their denunciations and reproof. This part of their mission they fulfilled in the kingdom of Samaria, as well as in that of Jerusalem, because the Jewish race was the chief one in both, and the heavenly inspired prophets Elias and Eliseus, it is well known, concerned themselves chiefly with the first.

These holy men, either on Mount Garizim or on Mount Sion, did

not hesitate to place themselves often in antagonism with the spiritual leaders of the people. Against the priests of Baal in Samaria they always waged a holy war, as one of the great objects of the gift of prophecy was to check the progress of idolatry, and to keep pure the worship of the supreme God alone. But even the unworthy successors of Aaron in Jerusalem often experienced the open opposition of the true prophets of God ; and very strange to say, a private gift like that of prophecy granted to an obscure layman, now and then rose in Judea above the dignity of the high-priest, consecrated by the most sublime rites, and placed with solemnity on the pontifical throne first occupied by the brother of Moses. In the old records of Central Asia we read also sometimes of "inspired men" or "prophets" placed side by side with the appointed "ministers of the gods" or "high-priests ;" but always in subjection to them, and never daring to rise above the official dignity of the priesthood. As late as the time of Strabo, there existed yet, south of the Caucasus, between the Euxine and the Caspian seas, theocracies of this ancient type, but altogether invaded by polytheism. The priesthood ruled over large tracts of country ; and a great number of inferior ministers obeyed the commands of the "*archiereus*." The Greek geographer relates that many of these inferior ministers were divinely inspired, and foretold future events ; but when some of them received a greater effusion of spiritual gifts, and left the society of the others to obey its inspirations, instead of being able to resist the authority of the high-priest, and claim superior endowments, the pontiff had only to go with some of his attendants to the wilderness where the unlucky "prophet" had retired. There, as soon as found, he was seized without offering any resistance, bound with "sacred" fetters, and brought back to the precincts of the temple, where he was treated with the greatest consideration and respect, until the next festival of the "goddess," to whom he was to be offered as a sacrifice at the head of many less illustrious victims. This was the hideous copy the degenerated religions of the East had made of the primitive divine institutions, vouchsafed to them at first in their purity.

But in Judea the gift of prophecy, being always real and heavenly, was also always able to vindicate its character. If occasionally priests, kings, or people rose in rebellion against the utterer of unwelcome truths, the prophet might become a martyr, but always preserved his dignity and condemned his murderers. Oftener he closed his days in peace, and the productions of his inspiration were

preserved to posterity, and many of them have come down even to us, never any more in danger of perishing.

What was first spoken to and for the Jews became, therefore, the property of mankind, and has, in particular, turned to be the heirloom of Christians. The oracles of the Hebrew prophets have thus woven together the chief threads of the immense chain of human history, which, without them, becomes almost inextricably confused. But the most prominent object of the distant future, which they have pointed out repeatedly and with the most vivid brightness, is what we call the Catholicity of the Christian Church, to which we must again revert, rich already in so many anterior predictions.

#### 6. *Prophecies of David.*

For the sake of condensation, the most striking passages of the Old Testament alone must come under review ; and many allusions, nay, positive statements or promises, have to be passed over. In the Psalms of David an immense number of these could be collected and commented upon. Our scope confines us to a few of the most remarkable ones. Of the whole Psalter, a certain number of poems were the work of other sacred writers besides David. Those only which were undoubtedly his productions are our proper theme, because in these alone there is a peculiar appropriateness with regard to the subject under consideration. David was in his own person a great type of the Messiah who had been announced as destined to come from his lineage. For, henceforth the Great One promised from the beginning as “the expectation of the nations,” he who had been called so far the son of Judah, was to be known as the son of David.\* Thus the subsequent prophets called him, and thus likewise the priests of Jerusalem announced to the wise men that the Messiah should be born at Bethlehem, the ancestral place of his family. And when the angel told Mary that she would conceive of the Holy Ghost, the heavenly messenger added, “He shall be called the son of the Most High ; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father.”† The future reign of Christ was therefore to be compared to the reign of David his ancestor ; and the shepherd of Bethlehem, the youngest of the sons of Isai, became the type and figure of Christ ; and the future universal

\* 2 Kings vii. 12-16 ; 8 Kings ix. 5.

† Luke i. 32.

extension of the Church was foreshadowed by the sway of the great king in Palestine and Syria. The Jewish rabbis, at the time of Christ and before, knew perfectly well this analogy of the figure and the reality, of the type and the antitype ; and they were in general well acquainted with the passages of the Psalms which referred to the Messiah and his future kingdom. Hence, when our Saviour wished to convince the Scribes and Pharisees that the promised Deliverer was to be God, he merely quoted to them the first verse of the 109th Psalm, "The Lord hath said to my Lord," which is indeed unintelligible to a modern Arian, but was perfectly clear to an ancient rabbi. Unfortunately, modern rabbis have become more than Arians in this regard.

Nothing more is needed as a preparation to this part of the subject. And first it is to be remarked that a great number of passages undoubtedly written by David himself, speak clearly and emphatically of a future kingdom of God among all nations, of the acknowledgment by all races of the unity of God, consequently of the more or less radical destruction of idolatry, then prevalent everywhere. And evidently likewise these passages refer to a future state of things very different from what obtained at the time of David and Solomon, to a future kingdom far more extensive than the possessions of the rulers of Judea at the time of their highest prosperity, to a universal sway, in fact, embracing all races of men, and all countries of the globe, namely, to the spiritual power of the Messiah.

The 2d Psalm contains the first allusion of David to these great hopes : "I am appointed king by him [God] over Sion, his holy mountain. I preach his commandment. The Lord hath said to me, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession." The whole poem, *Quare fremuerunt gentes*, refers evidently to the Messiah, and the phrase, "Ask of me," etc., has no meaning unless it is explained of the future submission of the "Gentiles" to the yoke of Christ. Hence, according to Haydock on this passage, Rabbi Solomon had the candor to say openly what many other modern Jewish rabbis have thought without daring to express it in so many words : "Our doctors used to refer this Psalm to the Messiah ; but it is better to apply it to David on account of 'Christians.'" It may be "better" for the cause of Judaism, but it is certainly far less acceptable to reason itself ; and the old "doctors who used to

refer it to the Messiah" were far more sensible men than Rabbi Solomon, who adopted another interpretation "on account of the Christians."

It is not to be doubted that many German interpreters understand the forty-fourth Psalm as describing only the marriage of Solomon with the daughter of the King of Egypt; and obstinately refuse to recognize in it the union of Christ with his Church. Yet it is sure that the Jews of old acknowledged in it both meanings, and confessed candidly that to refer this sublime poem to Solomon alone necessitates more than one forced interpretation irreconcilable with truth and propriety. It is needless to add that all the Fathers, without exception, refer this Psalm to Christ and his Church, and think that the marriage of the Jewish king was merely the occasion of this wonderful effusion of prophetic enthusiasm. But it is admitted in actual exegesis that the Fathers of the Church understood nothing of the meaning of Scripture, and that modern Hebrew scholars were the first to find out its true sense. Let the reader listen and judge:

"Thy throne, *O God*, lasts for ever and ever. The sceptre of thy kingdom is a sceptre of uprightness. Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity; therefore, *O God*, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness."

"The queen stood on thy right hand, in cloth of gold, surrounded with variety. Hearken, O daughter, and see and incline thine ear; and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the king shall greatly desire thy beauty; for he is the Lord *thy God*; and *Him* all shall *adore*. And the daughters of Tyre with gifts shall entreat thy countenance. . . . After her shall virgins be brought to the king. They shall be brought with gladness and rejoicings; they shall be brought into the temple of the king. Instead of thy fathers, sons are born to thee; thou shalt make them princes over all the earth. They shall remember thy name throughout all generations. Therefore all peoples shall praise thee for ever; yea for ever and ever."

Of Christ it could be three times asserted with truth that he was God; of Solomon one single assertion of this kind would have been blasphemous in the ideas of the Hebrews. They were not addicted to such fulsome flattery when addressing their kings. It was directly opposed to the divine law they obeyed. Since, therefore, the subject of the poem is called God three times, it cannot be primarily Solomon.

In the Christian Church alone can we see the reality of that "daughter of the king" forgetting her people and her father's house

—that is, “her idolatrous ancestors ;” ardently loved by Christ, her Lord and God ; followed incessantly by a long train of “virgins” brought to the Temple of the king ; a queen not barren, but the mother of “many sons,” instead of the fathers she has renounced ; making these “sons” “princes over all the earth,” and this “for ever and ever.” Indeed, to depict the mystic spouse of Christ we could not find more just and vivid expressions. How could it be said of Solomon that “Him all shall adore” ?

There is, however, a difficulty for modern readers to accept at once this interpretation, which requires a few words of explanation. “A Christian,” people will say, “used to a mystic language, can understand an ascetic writer, like St. Teresa, or St. John of the Cross, speaking of the spiritual wedding of the Christian soul with God or with Christ. He can even admit the propriety of celebrating the love of Christ with his Church under the emblem of an ordinary marriage feast. But who can suppose that such an imagery as this could be easily understood by the gross Jewish mind ? If David or Solomon intended to speak as prophets, and foretell the future Church of Christ under the figure of a bride, their first care would have been not to use such metaphor or allegory as the one which is supposed to be contained in the forty-fourth Psalm. They could not have expected that the Hebrews of subsequent ages and of their own would have gone farther than the gross idea conveyed in the literal expressions of the poem.” This, no doubt, is the firm persuasion of many German exegetists ; and for this reason not only they refuse to go farther than the literal meaning in interpreting the forty-fourth Psalm, but they cannot see the possibility of understanding the Canticle of Solomon in the mystic sense. This seems to them absurd ; but in this they show themselves perfectly ignorant of the bent of the Oriental mind in all ages, at least, in antiquity. The most ancient Jewish interpreters of the Old Testament are unanimous in interpreting the Canticle of Solomon by the love of Jehovah for Israel. It would have been sacrilegious in their eyes to give it a literal meaning. The text of the Bible itself, in many passages of the Old Testament, represents constantly the mutual relation of the Jewish people with Jehovah by a conjugal union ; and the same figure is used in the New Testament to portray the reciprocal love of Christ with his disciples, that is, with his Church. Thus Jesus Christ is called by John the Baptist, “the Spouse.”\* The

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\* John, iii. 29.

Saviour himself calls his disciples "the friends of the Spouse."\* St. Paul, in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians,† and St. John the Evangelist, in his Apocalypse, ‡ use the same form of language.

Not only such an interpretation as this was natural to the Jews and was not too refined for their "gross mind," but in general all Oriental nations, at least in antiquity, were fond of expressing, under the same images, the very exalted love of God for man, or of man for God. No ancient Brahmin would have understood literally the episode of Krishna with the Gopis; and there is a Persian poem, which Sir William Jones quotes at length, full of an imagery far from edifying to a modern reader; yet the founder of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta assures us that devout Persians read it with as much profit to their soul as if it was the effusion of purity itself.

The natural religion of the ancient world was very different from the philosophical considerations of modern deistic writers. The human heart, the worshiper's imagination, all the faculties of his soul, could not be satisfied but with the highest soarings of poetry. In this the Jews were not behind the Hindoos and the Persians of the epoch of the Vedas and of the Zendas. It is not true, consequently, that there was for them any difficulty in ascribing a mystic sense to such an *epithalamium* as the forty-fourth Psalm contains. If thus the forty-fourth Psalm applies much more naturally to Christ and his universal Church than to Solomon and his Egyptian bride, the following forty-fifth can have no double interpretation: we merely quote the four last verses of the poem: "Come, and behold ye the works of the Lord; what wonders he hath done upon earth, making wars to cease even to the end of the earth. He shall destroy the bow, and break the weapons; and the shield he shall burn in the fire. Be still, and see that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, and I will be exalted on the earth. The Lord of armies is with us; the God of Jacob is our protector."

The forty-sixth is but a continuation of the previous one; only more emphatic and triumphant.

"Sing praises to our God, sing ye: sing praises to our king, sing ye. For God is the king of all the earth: sing ye wisely. God shall reign over the nations: God sitteth on his holy throne. *The princes of the people are gathered together, with the God of Abraham;* for he is far elevated above the gods, the shields of the earth." This last

\* Matt. ix. 15.

† 2 Cor. ii. 2.

‡ Apoc. xxi. 2.

phrase is translated from the Hebrew text. Here no comment is necessary.

It is really pleasant, and almost ludicrous, when reading the sixty-sixth Psalm, to understand that according to many exegetists it was merely a “harvest song,” to express the joy of the people when gathering and bringing home the first-fruits of the summer season. Here is a full half of the hymn :

“ Let people confess to thee, O God : let all people give praise to thee. Let the nations be glad and rejoice : for thou judgest the people with justice, and directest the nations upon earth. Let the people, O God, confess to thee : let all the people give praise to thee : the earth hath yielded her fruit.”

It can be well understood that if a number of joyful harvesters come home in the evening with carts loaded with grain or grapes, and sing together, “God be praised, the earth hath yielded her fruit,” it is only a genuine harvest ditty, and nothing more. But why call on *all nations* to be glad and rejoice ? why say that God judgeth the people with justice, and directeth the nations, unless the author of the poem, on the occasion of the gathering in of the fruits of the earth, saw prophetically another gathering in of all nations to be “judged with justice” and “directed” by the only God that has a right to lead men ? We have thus a beautiful illustration of the *figurative* character so often visible in the Old Testament. The most simple occurrences of life with the Jews were emblems either of sublime truths or of future mighty events.

But as far greater things yet await us in the interpretation of some other Psalms, there is merely time to state that the eighty-fifth\* positively asserts that, “All the nations thou hast made shall come and adore before thee, O Lord : and they shall glorify thy name. For thou art great, and dost wonderful things ; thou art God alone.”

The one hundred and first† says : “The Gentiles shall fear thy name, O Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.”

A more thorough research would, no doubt, furnish many more texts of the same import ; but what has been quoted is amply sufficient. We must come to some of those bright effusions of genius and of grace more eloquent still than any of those just passed under review.

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\* Ver. 9.

† Ver. 16.

The twenty-first Psalm is certainly a wonderful composition. In the first twenty-two verses the sufferings of a human being are powerfully described, and in the remainder of the poem the healing effects of his tortures are represented as benefiting the whole of mankind, and converting all men to the Lord. This second part is the one that chiefly concerns us, yet it is not possible to pass over the first entirely.

We need not say again that modern Jews and most of non-Catholic interpreters see in it only the trials of David. They appear to be perfectly well satisfied that the prophet-king intended in this poetical effusion merely to pour out his personal complaints into the ears of God, and obtain the divine help to escape from the toils spread before him by his enemies. But unfortunately for the accuracy of this interpretation, history has told us all David had to suffer during his life, and certainly many of the things over which he laments are altogether foreign to the events of his personal career, and he must speak of another, of whom he was only the figure. This first half of the twenty-first Psalm is nothing else, in fact, than a faithful abridgment of the passion of Christ ; and so many traits are common both to it and to the narrative of the Gospels, that every year, when Passion-tide returns, the mind of the Christian is powerfully struck with the perfect identity of both. Hence, we are told again that the Jewish rabbis, anterior to Christianity, referred it to the future Messiah ; although they must have done so only from tradition, since they were all strongly led to see in the coming Saviour only a glorious conqueror and king. But certainly they could not apply it to David alone ; as it was for them a canon of exegesis to refer to the Messiah whatever any prophet said of himself, when it could not be substantiated by his personal history. For all Christians the question has been decided by Christ our Lord himself, who on the cross applied to his own person and present sufferings several passages of this Psalm, and who certainly had it present to his mind when he was hanging on the tree to which he was attached for the sins of men, since he then repeated the first verse of this moving elegy : "O God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?"

But more detailed considerations on this subject must be set aside ; and leaving the reader himself to look into it, we pass on to the second part, which is the chief object we must have in view. The sacred writer moves on abruptly, and seems at once to change his

theme without any connecting link. From a gloomy description of horrible torments, he passes on at once to the soothing picture of a universal banquet, where "all the kindred of the Gentiles, converted to the Lord, are adoring him." As the poem was, in fact, what the Greeks called an "ode," no one can be surprised at this sudden and apparently unconnected shifting of the scene. But Isaias, who also described the same passion of the Saviour, and the same effects of it on mankind, has supplied us with the necessary short phrase for the happy concordance of the whole ; it is this : "*Si posuerit animam suam pro peccato, videbit semen longarum ;*" "by giving his life for the sins of men, he will secure to himself an enduring posterity." Then the whole poem becomes consistent and clear.

We remark in it first the strong and well-defined assertion that "all the ends of the earth shall remember, and shall be converted to the Lord. And all the kindreds of the Gentiles shall adore in his sight. For the kingdom is the Lord's, and he shall have dominion over the nations."\* It is impossible to express in stronger terms the thought already repeated over and over again, that a universal religion would prevail after the death of Christ, and that the most striking characteristic of it would be its catholicity. But one word in the present prophecy deserves to be attentively considered. The Vulgate, as usual in the Psalms, perfectly in accord with the Hebrew text, says : "*Reminiscentur et convertentur ad Dominum universi fines terræ ;*" and the Douai version translates it, "All the ends of the earth shall remember," etc. The word "remember" in English, which requires an expressed object, does not literally render the Latin "*reminiscentur*," which is without any expressed object. "To reflect on the past" and think of it in general, would be nearer to the text. Bossuet has admirably commented on this word, and the passage is given in a note.†

\* Ver. 28.

† "La première et la plus ancienne connaissance du genre humain est celle de la Divinité ; l'idolatrie répandue depuis tant de siècles par toute la terre, n'était autre chose qu'un long et profond oubli de Dieu : rentrer dans cette connaissance et revenir à soi-même après un si mortel assoupiissement, pour reconnaître Dieu qui nous a faits, c'est ce que David appelle *s'en ressouvenir* ; et il explique que ce devait être l'heureuse et prochaine suite du cruciflement de Jésus-Christ. C'est ici la grande merveille ; car qui ne s'étonnerait que les gentils, depuis tant de siècles, plus sourds et plus muets que les idoles qu'ils servaient, et qui avaient si profondément oublié Dieu, qu'ils semblaient n'en avoir retenu le nom que pour le profaner, se soient tout d'un coup réveillés au nom de Jésus Christ

These few lines of the great Bishop of Meaux express so graphically what literally took place at the first preaching of the apostles, that the single phrase of David, whose comment it is, would almost entitle him to be called a prophetic historian of the future dissemination of the Church all over the globe ; owing—if we may use the expression—to the profound surprise experienced by the Gentiles when they found that, after all, they had a *Christian soul*, according to the phrase of Tertullian, even before Christianity was preached to them ; so that the whole process of their sudden conversion could be almost referred to the remembrance of those truths communicated to mankind at its very origin, and never altogether dead in the mind and heart of man, although “profoundly forgotten,” as Bossuet has it, and remaining unperceived and idle in the depth of their spiritual nature. Nearly all those early Christian writers who were converted from paganism bear out this strange fact, called by Tertullian—one of them—“the testimony of a Christian soul.” Constantine himself has remarked it with surprise and admiration.

But this second part of the twenty-first Psalm does not announce only the effect of the Saviour’s death in those powerful and suggestive terms, but represents the same under the figure of a feast, of a universal banquet. What can be the meaning of this ? The words of the prophet must first be quoted. It is Christ himself who speaks to God his father :

“I will declare thy name to my brethren ; in the midst of the Church will I praise thee.

“Ye that fear the Lord, praise him ; all ye, the seed of Jacob, glorify him. . . .

“Because he hath not slighted nor despised the supplication of the poor man.

“Neither hath he turned away his face from me ; and when I cried to him he heard me.

“With thee is my praise in a great church ; I will pay my vows in the sight of them that fear him.

“The poor shall eat and shall be filled ; and they shall praise the Lord that seek him ; their hearts shall live for ever and ever.

“All the ends of the earth shall remember,” etc. (as above).

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ressuscité et qu’ils soient venus les uns sur les autres de toutes les parties du monde, pour composer la grande Église qui était destinée au Sauveur du monde. C’est de quoi on ne peut jamais s’étonner assez, ni assez remercier le Seigneur.”

“All the rich of the earth have eaten and have adored ; all they that go down to the earth shall fall before him.

“And to him my soul shall live ; and my seed shall serve him.

“There shall be declared to the Lord a generation to come, and the heavens shall show forth his justice to a people that shall be born, which the Lord hath made.”

The whole is a comment on the thought of Isaias : “If he gives his life for the sinners, he will see his seed live for ever,” which must be the meaning of *semen longavum* in the Vulgate.

These are certainly very strange expressions ; but after what has just been said, it will not be difficult to find out their meaning. It is plain first, that the existence of a Church sprung out from the side of our Lord on the cross (since it was then born), is here predicted by the sacred writer ; and it is emphatically called a “great” Church. That future “congregation” shall be granted to “the supplication of the poor man,” namely, of Christ on the cross, because “when he cried to God, God heard him.” Christ will forever receive praise in this great Church together with God his Father ; and he will himself “pay his vows” at the head of the faithful, with whom he will be consequently forever united. And all this will be the fruit of the redemption worked out by the sufferings of the Saviour. A great number of Catholic interpreters prove that there can be no other meaning of the passage just quoted. The poet speaks of a Church embracing all mankind, born on the cross, and granted by the Almighty Father to the “supplication” of his Son ; a Church which will forever give praise to Christ and to his Father, both the object of the same worship ; a Church at the head of which Christ is to be forever, praying himself and giving praise, as well as the last of the future worshipers ; forming consequently one mystic body, having Christ for its head. This Psalm of David thus anticipated by many centuries the sublime doctrine of St. Paul in his Epistles to the Corinthians and to the Ephesians, which assert the same truths.

But it is particularly the description of the feast going on continually in that Church—namely, “among the people that shall be born” and in “the generation to come,” as the last verse of the Psalm expresses it—which must attract our attention, as it is manifest from the text that the banquet is to be an uninterrupted feature of this universal Church, and nothing shall contribute so powerfully to characterize it.

The text says : “The poor shall eat and shall be filled. . . .

Their hearts shall live for ever. . . . . All the rich of the earth have eaten and have adored ; all they that go down to the earth shall fall before him. And to him my soul shall live."

The "poor" are first mentioned as partakers of the banquet, and as finding in it the full satisfaction of their craving for food ; and the kind of nourishment referred to will be such that "their hearts shall live for ever."

"The rich of the earth" themselves are not to be excluded from the feast ; they are represented as having "eaten and adored." So that they fall or prostrate themselves before "him," namely, before the suffering Saviour. This simple recital of the main features of this part of the prophecy shows that it speaks here of the Eucharist. A Christian cannot be surprised that a particular announcement of it should be made in the Old Testament ; as it was to be, both as sacrifice and as sacrament, the main exterior and at the same time interior characteristic of the future universal Church. The words of this Psalm are the first to give in detail the most striking of these characteristics, chiefly of the intrinsic kind. Many texts have already been adduced having reference to that great family of the children of God, but all extremely compendious and general. Even the prophecies of Balaam and of Tobias, although already glowing and pointed at the same time, are far from expressing so powerfully what the future Church was to be. Here we have, we may say, a full account of it, at least with respect to its spiritual privileges. All Gentiles are called to it, men of all races are destined to profit by its blessings ; all are adoring the same supreme God, and the same Saviour. That holy Redeemer—after having "acquired this Church at the price of his blood," as St. Paul said later, and as David showed so eloquently in this Psalm—being the Head of it, he becomes forever the first adorer of God, and the common intercessor for all. After all these sublime forebodings, no one can be astonished that something further should be announced, namely, the food of which the members of this heavenly organization were to be nourished ; and any one who is now the witness of what occurs every day and in all places, in the Christian Church, must find it natural that it should have been revealed long before Christ accomplished the promise of it, if there have been any prophecy at all regarding Christianity.

For, what is at this moment, and what has been since the spread of Christianity, the most striking feature of the holy society founded on earth by Christ and his apostles ? Its marks are well known : its

unity, universality, holiness, and apostolicity ; but these marks have to be closely studied, to be well seen and recognized. There is one, however, which strikes at first sight, and cannot be ignored even by those who do not belong to the mystic body itself : that is, the "memorial and renewal of the great sacrifice of the cross," and the "universal reception of the body and blood" of Christ as a source of spiritual life. The first is the main center of all true Christian worship in the eyes of the whole world ; and the second is the perpetual source of holiness and spiritual joy for individual souls. When David lived and wrote, Malachi had not yet announced this great fact of a future universal offering to God : "From the rising of the sun, even to its going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation ; for my name is great among the nations, saith the Lord of hosts."

This "clean oblation," to be universal and repeated until the end of time, must spring from a great fact, lying at the foundation of the new and pure worship, as the yearly sacrifice of the Paschal lamb originated for the Jews in the preservation of the first-born of the Israelites at the passage of the destroying angel. This great fact for the Christians is the passion of the Saviour himself, and David, in describing it, placed minutely before our eyes the source of the great act of worship which was to prevail henceforth everywhere. He showed the Redeemer "surrounded with enemies ; his bones shattered, his strength exhausted, his tongue cleaving to his palate, his hands and feet pierced, his garments parted among his executioners who cast lots upon his robe." This is the great sacrifice of the cross which we all know, and which David described so accurately. It was destined to be repeated forever as a source of grace when a spiritual food should be distributed to "poor and rich" alike.

It is a solemn fact that from the first preaching of the apostles down to our own time, whenever the Church could perform her rites unmolested by enemies and persecutors, the first and most conspicuous of these rites has always been the public celebration of the Eucharist. It was some time performed in secret in the catacombs of Rome, in the wildest and most deserted spots of Africa or of Asia, when persecution raged, and the name of Christian was a death-warrant. But as soon as peace was restored, Christian edifices rose above ground, immense in size and rich in decorations in large cities ; small and unadorned in villages and hamlets. In all of

them, in whatever part of the world they had been erected, the sacrifice of the mass—as it is called—was celebrated ; all know with what splendor in rich and powerful countries ; all are aware with what divine simplicity and heartfelt devotion in rural districts, or uncivilized parts of the globe. Liturgies may differ ; some of the ceremonies may be peculiar to particular regions ; there may be a little more or less incense, and lights, and chanting, and music ; but everywhere the worshiper knows that it is “the sacrifice of the Lamb,” the repetition of the great offering of the cross, whether celebrated on the banks of the Tiber, of the Seine, of the Danube, or along the frozen Mackenzie, the wild Amazon, and La Plata. German expositors may ridicule the idea that all this was announced by David and Malachi ; they may see in the words of the Bible vague predictions, without meaning at the time they were uttered, and which Christians drew to a conformity with their own religious system in after time. But we maintain that there are too many examples of this “conformity” between the “sights” of the old “seers” and the accomplishment of their “visions,” for the thing to have happened by chance. We say that Christ or his apostles have stated clearly enough that this “conformity” was in fact “intended” by the great source of inspiration, the Spirit of God who spoke to us through the prophets, as the Father himself spoke to us through his Son ; and it is chiefly this assertion of Christ and of his apostles which must carry with it our assent. When we hear the Saviour utter on the cross the very words by which the twenty-first Psalm commences, and cry out : “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?” we become directly mindful of all the details of his passion, and at the sight of the astonishing “conformity” of both with each other, we exclaim instantly “*Digitus Dei est hic.*” Thus, likewise, when we hear God saying through Malachi, that he is tired of the sacrifices of animals so negligently offered him by the Israelites—*non est mihi voluntas in vobis*—and that the day shall come when an “oblation” pleasing in his sight will be offered everywhere ; then comparing with it what we see in our day and what has been seen by our ancestors since the time of Christ, we exclaim likewise, “God alone could do this ; his action appears in this wonderful accuracy !”

If now we look closely to the description of the banquet portrayed by David in this Psalm, we cannot but be astonished at the precision of the details contained in so very few words. It is in the midst of this “Great Church” where the Redeemer himself “pays his vows,”

that is, glorifies his Father, and *supplicates* "in the sight of those that fear him," that "the poor shall eat and shall be filled, and their heart shall live forever." It is there likewise that "the rich of the earth eat and adore, and prostrate themselves on the ground." It is a wonderful fact that we have here a perfect representation of what takes place almost daily, but chiefly every year at Easter time, in all Christian churches, even in those separated by schism from the center of unity, but which have preserved the boon of a rightfully-ordained priesthood, and legitimately-administered sacraments.

We can ask ourselves why "the poor" are distinguished from "the rich," and why a different expression is given to their exterior bearing. And first, a word will not be inappropriate on the real meaning in Hebrew of the expressions we render by "rich" and "poor." Some modern exegetists may call our interpretation "fanciful," and we must fully justify it, independently of the Vulgate, whose text suffices amply for all Catholica.

The word translated by "poor" can offer no difficulty. In the original text it has no other meaning than "the meek" or "the poor," and both are convertible in the language of Scripture. Besides, this expression is evidently opposed to the word of the thirty-second verse, which is translated by "the rich;" and the Hebrew word thus rendered can have no other sense, chiefly considering its relation to the twenty-eighth verse. The literal meaning is, "the fat ones"—*pingues*—namely, those that live in luxury and in the midst of plenty, as *Dives* in the Gospel; "the rich and powerful" is the best English translation.

The only objection, in fact, which could be raised, is with respect to the kind of banquet spoken of in this Psalm. It has been commented upon sufficiently. We will add only that "real eating" is here the literal meaning, and "the reception of the true doctrine," as Protestant interpreters generally propose, is only a subsidiary sense, which we cannot refrain from calling here far-fetched, and unsupported by the whole context, although in a secondary line of interpretation we admit it.

The twenty-first Psalm, therefore, represents to us a "feast" spread for all men, of which the rich shall partake as well as the poor; but, as Father Thomas Leblanc says, in the second volume of his commentary on the Psalms,\* "The poor are the first because

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\* Edit. 1698, p. 559.

Christ himself was poor, and loved particularly the poor ; and because the poor, being less attached to this world, the kingdom of heaven is especially theirs. Hence, in the description of the feast as portrayed by St. Luke xiv. 16, etc."—which in our opinion was intended by our Lord to announce the same banquet—"a certain man made a great supper, and invited many, etc. ;' the man who had bought a farm excused himself, as he wished to go and see it ; the one who had bought five yoke of oxen had to try them, and could not go ; the young man who had married a wife of course could not come. The poor alone, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, those whom misery reduced to the necessity of dwelling in the open air, in the highways and along hedges, were admitted to the banquet, and clad in the wedding garment."

The "rich," however, according to David, invited as well as the "poor," were not all to refuse to come. Some of them were also destined to eat of that celestial food. But their bearing is described as very different from that of the poor. Not only they eat, like their destitute brethren, but they adore, they prostrate themselves on the ground, they assume an humble attitude not mentioned of the others. What can be the meaning of this difference ? The poor certainly have to adore, as well as to eat, to prostrate themselves before the Saviour whom they receive ; but it is not said expressly of them, because it is for them a natural act, and no one is surprised to see them in an humble attitude, and full of thankfulness for any benefit conferred upon them. The rich, on the contrary, the "powerful of the earth," disdain generally to assume a lowly posture, and in general scarcely consent to bend slightly their head to those they wish to honor. Yet they will have, at the banquet of the Lord, not only to bend the knee, but even to prostrate themselves on the ground, and acknowledge themselves as nothing in the presence of their Saviour and their God.

There is, perhaps, something more, which we offer, however, diffidently, and which every one can certainly reject or admit only as a "pious thought." It is this :

Our Lord allows the poor to come to him with more familiarity and less ceremony than the rich. He does not require of them such a protracted preparation, and—if it is not rash in us to say so—such a thorough purifying of the soul and body. They must, of course, be free from mortal stain, and absolved from the grievous offenses of which they may have been guilty. But as what is called "culture"

cannot be expected of them, our Lord overlooks in them not only a disorderly dress and unseemly apparel, but even many less important irregularities of the senses, and apparent outbursts of little passions. They may walk intrepidly to the holy table after an unguarded expression denoting irritability ; and as their soul is not so vividly alive to interior propriety, they may even kneel mechanically, and scarcely show on their faces that they truly “adore ;” although, if you ask them, they will protest that they do, and it is just and fair to believe them, in spite of exterior appearances. Thus, at his last supper—and it is most remarkable—our Lord did not give any lesson to his most simple apostles how they should receive him in the sacrament ; but almost directly after some of them had shown feeling in discussing the question, Who should be the first in his kingdom ?—he gave himself to all of them, without wishing any of them to withdraw, except the open traitor Judas.

But the “rich,” the “powerful of the earth,” have to be more careful not only in their interior dispositions, but likewise in their exterior demeanor. They have to remember that they belong to a class of whom Christ has said : “Woe to the rich ;” that he has declared : “It is more difficult for them to enter heaven than for a camel to pass through a needle’s eye ;” that if he has three or four times, during his life on earth, entered the mansions of the wealthy to dine with them, he has spent the whole remainder of it in the society of the poor. It is consequently with feelings akin to fear that the rich ought to go to him ; and unless they show, by their simple lives and abundant charities, that they are not wedded to this world, but that in the midst of their copious means they are really “poor in spirit,” they must dread to appear before their Saviour, who is to be one day their judge. On this account, if they wish to be admitted to the banquet of the eucharist, they must purify more perfectly their souls, and show by their whole bearing the deep impression made upon them by the condescension of their Redeemer ; whom they have to “adore” humbly, whilst of the poor it is said simply that “they eat and are filled.”

These considerations are offered as consonant with the whole passage on which we comment ; but they are given with some diffidence, as we do not find them expressed by any authorized interpreter. One thing, however, is certain : that the effect of that heavenly food is as clearly expressed in the Psalm as it is in the Gospel, for those who receive it worthily, either poor or rich : “Their heart shall live for-

ever and ever." If we collect together all the passages of the New Testament where our Lord speaks of the effect on the soul of the worthy reception of the eucharist, we are struck with the phrase penned by David so many centuries before, and we become more fully convinced that the prophet-king intended to describe the eucharistic banquet. In St. John it is called "the bread of God which cometh down from heaven, and giveth *life* to the world,"\* and in verse thirty-fifth, "I am the bread of *life*;" a word which the Saviour explains more fully in verses forty-eighth and following: "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the desert, and died. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that, if any man eat of it, he may not die. I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." As if he had not expressed himself clearly enough, he adds: "Verily, verily, I say to you, Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye shall not have life in you."† But he goes yet further in the following: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up on the last day."‡ So that the life he promises is the life eternal, and not only the soul shall partake of it, but the body shall participate in the same blessing, and the resurrection at the last day is represented as a boon attached particularly to the worthy reception of the holy eucharist.

Many more texts of the same purport might be adduced, but these will amply suffice; and there cannot be a doubt for any Christian—that is, for any man who raises himself above this world, who is convinced of a supernatural creation to the plane of which we have been raised by our Creator and Saviour, and appreciates fully the exaltation of our redeemed humanity—that the feast described by David as giving forever life to the heart of man, is the one prepared for us by our Lord in the sacrament.

In concluding this commentary, we must again bring back the mind of the reader to the character of universality, so clearly ascribed in the twenty-first Psalm, to the beneficial effects of the passion of Christ, by these words: "All the ends of the earth shall remember, and shall be converted to the Lord; and all the kindred of the Gentiles shall adore in his sight. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and

\* John vi. 33.

† Ver. 54.

‡ Ver. 55.

he shall have dominion over the nations." This is the main subject of these considerations, and it is proper to point out the word "kindred," rendered in the Vulgate by "*familias*," showing that all races of men, without exception, were destined to share in those extraordinary blessings. This will come more prominently in the reflections the seventy-first Psalm will now suggest.

Archbishop Kenrick remarks on it that "The subject is the Messiah, as the older Jewish Rabbis, and Rosenmüller, Hengstenberg, and many others hold." St. Jerome expressly says: "This Psalm is properly referred to Christ; the predictions are too sublime to be applied to an earthly king." Of course many modern exegetists see only in it a description of the reign of Solomon. Whoever is determined on excluding the supernatural from the Bible, and on doing away with the prophetic spirit so remarkable in it, can torture the text into any realistic meaning he pleases. Thus, both the Mosaic and the Christian religions become only natural creeds without any of the characters of a divine revelation; and both the Old and New Testaments are turned into a series of fanciful legends and nursery tales. Nay, more, no one can see how, in this case, the sublime records of Jews and Christians alike can be vindicated from the guilt of the grossest imposture. To this blasphemous assertion are rapidly coming the numerous pretended exegetists whose chief object seems to be to explain away whatever bears a supernatural impress in the revealed word of God. But, to any one who has yet retained something of the respect due to it, this Psalm speaks certainly of the Messiah; and it is doubtful even, in our opinion, that, secondarily, the glories of Solomon's kingdom were in the least intended, although the supposition is not altogether worthy of reprobation.

The reader will do well to read the whole poem, with some short, reliable commentary; we merely quote the passages more appropriate to our purpose, and endeavor to show their real meaning:

"Give to the king thy judgment, O God; and to the king's son thy justice: to judge thy people with justice, and thy poor with judgment. . . .

"In his days shall justice spring up; and abundance of peace, till the moon be taken away.

"And he shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

"Before him the Ethiopians shall fall down; and his enemies shall lick the ground.

“The kings of Tarsis and the islands shall offer presents ; the kings of the Arabians and of Seba shall bring gifts.

“And all the kings of the earth shall adore him ; all nations shall serve him. . . .

“And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Arabia ; for to him they shall always pray ; they shall bless him all day long. . . .

“Let his name be blessed for evermore : his name continueth before the sun.

“And in him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed ; all nations shall magnify him.

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel . . . and blessed be the name of his majesty forever ; and the whole earth shall be filled with his majesty. So be it. So be it.”

There are here expressions which were met before : “In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed,” etc. But there are particularities of this Psalm which are worthy of a somewhat closer study. “Before him the Ethiopians shall fall down. . . . The kings of Tarsis and the islands shall offer presents ; the kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts. And all the kings of the earth shall adore him : all nations shall serve him.”

There is in these words an evident allusion to what is related in the Gospel of St. Matthew,\* of the coming of the wise men from the East to Bethlehem ; but their visit and the offering they made was only a transient act, which cannot be considered as a sufficient accomplishment of this prophecy. Three men cannot represent so many kings as are mentioned in this poem ; and the adoration of a moment cannot be considered as a fulfillment of the promise that the adoration of the Messiah would last forever “till the moon be taken away.” The seventy-first Psalm, therefore, must refer to a very different event from the simple fact related by St. Matthew in his second chapter.

At first sight, in reading the interpreters of the Bible, particularly the modern ones, even orthodox, the student is somewhat embarrassed to know what meaning he must attach to those “Ethiopians,” those men of “Tarsis and the isles,” those “Arabians” and “kings of Saba.” Archbishop Kenrick himself tells us that “the Hebrew term translated by ‘Ethiopians,’ means inhabitants of desert places, barbarous nations ;” that “remote regions in general are designated

by 'Tarsis' and the other various places ;" that the word translated by "Arabians" is "Sheba, a part of Arabia Felix ;" and finally that the place called "Saba" must be located in "Africa," referring to Genesis x. 6.

But if the very learned and judicious Archbishop of Baltimore was satisfied with these scanty words of explanation, the reason was that his plan confined him to very narrow exegetical limits. He was writing a book which was to be placed in the hands of students and clergymen having little time at their command ; and his object could not be to give full explanations of geographical details. Our very subject requires that a deeper and broader insight into these matters should be realized ; and some discussion at least on these words is necessary.

It is true that the Hebrew term rendered here by "Ethiopians" signifies generally "inhabitants of desert places and barbarous nations." The word *tsiim* in Hebrew means indeed the inhabitants of a desert, or rather of a dry country. Yet David must have had a particular region in view when he used the word ; and Ethiopia is certainly a dry country enough, at least the northern part of it, called now Nubia. To know if Ethiopia is the proper word here, we have to call upon the translators of the Bible when the traditional interpretation of it was yet fresh and could be relied upon, which is scarcely the case in our time—the Church alone having kept this tradition ; but in the first ages of Christianity, it existed yet, with respect to many difficult passages of the sacred text. Now, the Septuagint, Aquila, St. Jerome, etc., translate the Hebrew word by "Ethiopians ;" and every sensible man must admit this to be the true meaning, since at that time the interpretation of such ethnical terms could naturally have been preserved from the near anterior epoch when the Hebrew was a spoken language. Whatever meaning, nevertheless, is attached to the word *tsiim*, the Ethiopians will shortly come again under review.

"Tarsis," and the other places mentioned in the tenth verse, designate generally, says Archbishop Kenrick, "remote regions." As our peculiar object requires a greater precision of exegesis on this passage, it can be said with confidence that it is not very difficult to decide on the special meaning of Tarsis, and of Sheba, and of Saba. The first, Tarshish, in Hebrew, may, in some part of the Old Testament, mean any "remote region" on the sea-shore.

But we maintain that the author of the poem meant Tarsis in

Spain, called Tarshish by the Phœnicians, Tartessos by the Greeks, the chief city of the *Turdetani*, in the neighborhood of Gades. The reasons are these : The seventy-first Psalm was written by David, as the conclusion of it proves sufficiently : “The praises of David son of Jesse are ended.” He was the first king of Judea who entered into close alliance with the rulers of Tyre, and traded chiefly with them to obtain gold for the future Temple—of which he left at his death three thousand talents, an enormous sum.\* He certainly used the ships of the Phœnicians, as the Jews had not yet any fleet of their own. But it is certain that the Phœnicians, the Tyrians particularly, knew no other Tarshish but that of the south of Spain, which was their chief colony, and the main cause of the great prosperity of Tyre.† Besides these reasons, which are not certainly without weight, the word “Tarsis” is accompanied with the term “islands”—*Tarsis et insulae*. If the site of this commercial city had been on the eastern coast of Africa, or on the Indian coast of Malabar, as some exegetists imagine, there would have been no islands of any importance on the way nor in the neighborhood. Yet the text supposes there were. Nothing was so remarkable for the traders who went to Tarsis in Spain on the Phœnician ships, as the great number of beautiful and rich islands which they met, and at many of which they stopped. The Tyrians, in fact, at the time of David, possessed most of the islands of the Mediterranean Sea : Cyprus, Crete, Samothrace, Sicily, Sardinia, and, if we mistake not, the Baleares. It is very likely that whenever a ship started from Tyre or Sidon or Joppa, at the epoch of David or Solomon, it was announced to the traders and passengers that they would touch at such and such colony of Phœnicia, as the steamers of our days, leaving Liverpool for New York, touch sometimes at Halifax and Boston. It must, therefore, have been a usual way of speaking at the time : “I just came from Tarsis and the islands,”—“I am going to start for the islands and Tarsis.” We offer this merely as a very probable conjecture ; but a glance at the researches of Heeren on the commerce and colonies of the Phœnicians will convince every reader of it. Thus we will note that Tarsis and the islands were at the West of Palestine.

The “Arabians” of the tenth verse are called in Hebrew *Sheba*, and are supposed by Archbishop Kenrick to be the same as those

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\* 1 Paral. xxxix. 4

† See Heeren.

mentioned in Genesis x. 28 ; they were consequently Semites, and lived in Arabia Felix, southeast and east of Palestine. Most of the expositors are agreed on this point.

By the Saba of the eleventh verse the Saba of the land of Cush, mentioned in Genesis x. 7, is understood by most of the interpreters. The inhabitants of this region were Cushites or Ethiopians, and they lived undoubtedly south of Egypt and Palestine. Thus the Ethiopians, who are not so clearly proved to have been designated by the word *tsiim* of the ninth verse, appear with certainty in the eleventh, as Cushites of the *South*.

We are, therefore, prepared to obtain a clear view of this most interesting passage of the seventy-first Psalm. F. Thomas Leblanc, in the sixth volume of his *Commentary on the Psalms*,\* says : "Christ is thus declared to be the king of the whole earth." In the eighth verse it is said : "He shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river until the ends of the earth." This general proposition is then proved *per partes* : firstly, from the *South* the Ethiopians will come to adore him ; † secondly, from the *West* the Greeks, Italians, Gauls, Spaniards settled in or around the Mediterranean Sea "shall offer him presents ;" ‡ thirdly, from the *East* the kings of Sheba, or of Arabia and further eastern countries will "bring him gifts." § And as the *North*, which was to come last, is not mentioned in particular, it is evidently included in the last words of the eleventh verse : "all nations shall serve him." F. Berthier, besides other Catholic interpreters, takes the same view as F. Leblanc ; and undoubtedly the whole purport of this sublime poem is but poorly understood and explained, when anything short of what has just been said is considered as satisfactory.

#### 7. A few words on Ethnology.

We thus begin to enter into the study of Christian ethnology, which at last must attract our special attention ; and the first lesson that it furnishes us is in open contradiction with those modern writers who pretend that Christianity is "well adapted to the genius of some Aryan races, but will never satisfy the aspirations of other peoples." The first clear prophecy given with full details of the future conversion of the world, announced in the Bible, refers previously, in great part at least, to the Semites and Hamites, who were,

\* Art. ii. p. 558.

† Ver. 9.

‡ Ver. 10.

§ Ver. 11.

in fact, the first to become disciples of Christ. A few reflections on the subject will not be devoid of interest, before leaving the consideration of the Psalms, to come to the study of the prophets, strictly so-called.

It is indeed very remarkable that the first propagation of the Gospel by the apostles themselves took precisely the various directions indicated by the verses ninth, tenth, and eleventh of the seventy-first Psalm. Starting from Palestine, which was then in fact the center of the world, geographically and historically, before St. Peter went to establish himself in Rome, and before St. Paul evangelized the Aryan races around the Mediterranean, the religion of Christ spread itself directly south and east of Jerusalem. As soon as the first persecution by the Synagogue dispersed the new Christians, an angel is sent to Philip, saying : "Arise and go toward the south, to the way that goeth down from Jerusalem into Gaza : this is the desert. And rising up he went ; and behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch, of great authority under Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasures, had come to Jerusalem to worship," etc.\* He was baptized, and went back to his country, where he, no doubt, spread the Gospel. Thus the first step Christianity took out of Palestine was precisely toward Ethiopia. We are aware, likewise, how early Egypt received it, and how thoroughly the old country of the Pharaohs was converted to Christ.

The spread of the new religion was as rapid toward the east as it was toward the south. The history of the correspondence between our Lord and Abgar, King of Edessa, is far from being apocryphal. Eusebius and Moses of Choren profess, in what remain of their works, to have copied it themselves from the archives of the city. Modern critics do not reject it scornfully, as was previously the custom. Much more will be said on the subject later on. At any rate it is certain that in Armenia, in Persia, in Bactriana even, and the western coast of India as far as the Ganges, some very important episcopal sees are found existing in the most remote antiquity ; so that the apostleship of Bartholomew, of Thomas, and others, perhaps, did not remain without fruit. In Persia principally did the Church take deep root, and it would have conquered had it not been for the violent persecutions under the Sassanian kings, followed directly by the Mahometan invasions. When the proper time arrives, innumera-

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\* Acts viii. 26.

ble details will show how Catholicity suddenly expanded everywhere, and literally fulfilled at once all the promises of the Old Testament, and of Christ himself. There is no need of speaking here of its original progress toward the west, as it met in that direction the Aryan races, which modern scientists think particularly fit for its doctrines, and thus no objection is raised by them. But we must insist in general on the remarkable fact that Egyptians and Ethiopians; Cushites consequently and Hamites, as well as Syrians and Mesopotamians; Jews also, in great number—although the majority of the nation rejected it—Semites consequently and Arameans; as well as the southern and eastern branches of the Aryans; Persians, Bactrians, Indians, etc., not only were found willing to receive the new doctrine, but reached directly the summit of virtue and science, as many facts preserved yet in ancient ecclesiastical history prove. Christianity was so firmly rooted in Egypt that the Copts have kept it until our day, in spite of their heresy and of the Moslem. Ethiopia received it so thoroughly that at this very time the Abyssinians although monophysites remain Christians; and they have been, until our age, a firm barrier opposed to the spread of Mussulmanism which entirely surrounds them in northeastern Africa; and so of other eastern and southern nations.

When the accomplishment of these prophecies comes to be recorded, the reader will judge how preposterous is the idea that the religion of Christ is fit only for the noble Aryan races; and that neither the Semitic nor the Hamitic nations have ever felt any inclination for it. Christianity is the highest supernatural exponent of all the natural truths; and its adaptability is consequently co-extensive with our humanity. It is made for the Huron and the Cherokee, as well as for the Greek and the Roman. Its spread has been arrested so far in many countries by obstacles which are now giving way everywhere; and the prophecies of the ancient seers have the whole life of humanity for their field of accomplishment. Further reflections on the subject must be deferred until the actual facts of the early spread of Christianity come to be examined.

#### 8. *Prophecies of Isaias on various nations.*

Isaias has been called with justice by Pompignan, Archbishop of Vienne in France, “the prophet of the Gentiles, as St. Paul became their apostle.” To him chiefly was reserved to see in all its glorious

details, the future catholicity of the Christian Church. But, in order to enable him to fulfill such a mission, he was inspired first to announce the downfall of various Gentile empires ; and thus he became acquainted with many nations, which, after untold revolutions, prosperities, and misfortunes, were destined to embrace the faith, after the Jews had forfeited their glorious title. It may be said, consequently, that Isaias, without wishing it, became one of the greatest ethnographers of antiquity.

On this account, before coming to the revelations of the seer with regard to the distant time when the designs of Providence were to be developed over the whole earth, it is proper to hear what he was inspired to say of Egypt, of Persia, of Phœnicia, and of the multitude of tribes which surrounded Palestine, and lived even at a distance from it. When he is called, however, a great "ethnographer," this is not meant in the modern sense, by which nations are considered mainly with regard to their different races, and physical or moral aptitudes. The great Hebrew prophet was intimately convinced of this truth, maintained long after by St. Paul in his speech before the Athenian Areopagus, "God hath made of *one* all mankind, to dwell upon the whole face of the earth." He did not, consequently, need to refer to their natural peculiarities and leanings, to prove the unity of the human race ; and in his time no one doubted it, particularly among the Jews. But the great social features of mankind, by which nations have been "set apart from each other by the Almighty," as Moses says in his last canticle, struck the elevated mind of Isaias more forcibly than had been the case for any prophet before him ; and he began to address the words of God, his threats and promises, to the various nations by which Palestine was surrounded. He described their countries, their rivers and seas, their mountains, plains, or deserts, their peculiar occupations and social customs, their idolatry, in fine, and their absurd or cruel worship. No one had done it before him to the same extent. David had scarcely attempted it on a few occasions with respect to Egypt or Babylon. A word of it must, therefore, be said, in order to understand well what the great "son of Amos" will tell us of the universal spread of Christianity among these nations.

The prophecies of Isaias are thus naturally divided into two parts. The first, comprising thirty-nine chapters, contains the divine oracles of which we are now speaking, and which were addressed to a number of tribes and peoples flourishing in his time. There are in it,

certainly, several splendid passages having reference to the future Messiah and his Church. But the utterances of the prophet, with respect to these great themes, are principally found in the second part of his work, namely, in the last twenty-seven chapters. These will form, before long, the interesting object of our inquiry ; because, even were they alone of this character in the Old Testament, they would suffice to prove that the spread of the Catholic Church since the coming of the Saviour had been clearly announced beforehand.

He describes Jerusalem and its Jewish inhabitants,\* under the name of Ariel, which he defines sufficiently by the words, “the city which David took.” It was known formerly under the name of Jebus ; David called it Jerusalem after having taken possession of it. Isaias foretells at once its future destruction by the Romans ; for its capture by Nabuchodonosor would not sufficiently account for the whole chapter ; but the siege laid to it by Titus, and the subsequent catastrophe, are described in terms which call forcibly to the mind the prediction of the same event by our Saviour. Hear rather :

“ Woe to Ariel, the city which David took. Year is added to year ; the solemnities are at an end.

“ And I will make a trench about Ariel ; and it shall be in sorrow and mourning. . . .

“ And I will make a circle round about thee ; and will cast up a rampart against thee, and raise up bulwarks to besiege thee. . . .

“ And it shall be at an instant, suddenly. A visitation shall come from the Lord of hosts in thunder, and with earthquake, and with a great noise of whirlwind and tempest, and with the flame of devouring fire. . . .

“ Be astonished, and wonder ; waver, and stagger ; be drunk, and not with wine ; stagger, and not with drunkenness.

“ For the Lord hath mingled for you the spirit of a deep sleep.”

And the great cause of the future misfortune of the Jews is instantly given, in such precise terms, that it reads as if it had been written after the event :

“ The Lord will shut up your eyes ; he will throw a dark veil over the eyes of your prophets and princes.

“ And the vision of all shall be unto you as the words of a book

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\* Cap. xxix.

that is sealed, which when they shall deliver to one that is learned, they shall say : Read this ; and he shall answer : I cannot, for it is sealed."

Thus, because the Jews did not understand, by their own fault, the words of their prophets, they were unfaithful to the Lord, cast away, and their city destroyed. This is their whole history, and portrays at once the spiritual gifts they abused, their hard-heartedness, and the stubbornness of their temper, by which they were blinded so as not to be able to see that the Messiah had fulfilled all prophecies. The Saviour said later : "*Quia non novisti diem visitationis tuas.*"

After Jerusalem, several tribes in the neighborhood are vividly described with respect to the country they lived in, their chief peculiarities, their idolatrous worship, and their civil and political vicissitudes.

There is in the style of this great man something peculiar which is not found in any other Hebrew prophet. It is well known that the inspiration they all received did not interfere with their natural gifts. Considered in this light, it must be said that the talent of Isaias was beyond any comparison above that of any other writer of antiquity. The "sublime," as described by Longinus, is generally a stroke of lightning appearing here and there in an ordinary composition. With the son of Amos it is the habitual run of the pen in his hand.

Many remarkable details are mentioned in the fifteenth chapter and in the following, of the domestic and religious habits of the Moahites, and of their destruction by Nabuchodonosor. The most minute peculiarities of this country, on the confines of Palestine and Arabia Petraea, are given, so that its rivers, cities, mountains, and hills, as well as the impure religion of Chamos, and the domestic habits of the people, are described in a few words. Very little also is said of the Idumæans in chapter twenty-one ;\* but it is characteristic and picturesque : "On the mountain of Seir they have built their eyry, and placed their watchman. The king of Assyria is coming : and every inhabitant of the city † asks the sentinel with fear, 'Watchman, what news this night ?' 'The day is dawning,' he replies, 'but it is yet night, for I see the dark enemy coming. If you look out for him, seek carefully, but return back quick and

\* Ver. 11, et seq.

† Petra.

come directly to the protection of your walls.' " This, at least, is the sense of a few concise words, scarcely intelligible in their laconic brevity. Yet they are sufficient to place before the eyes of the reader the wild and mountainous country, and the rock-built city, known now to many travelers, and the suddenness of the surprise.

But serious attention must be given to the consideration of more important nations, placed at a greater distance from Jerusalem ; and it is proper to look for a moment at the interesting descriptions the prophet gives of the Phoenicians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Persians, and Ethiopians. It is here mostly that the descriptive power of the great writer is displayed with a wonderful accuracy.

First, look at the Phoenicians, so celebrated in ancient history, yet of whom so little is said in the previous books of the Old Testament. It is from Isaias, and Ezechiel, who came long after him, that we know them more thoroughly, and still, it is when announcing the destruction of their maritime power, that the prophet shows us particularly its greatness. The text of the Douai version we will greatly modify from the interpretation of Foreiro. This learned man, whose Hebrew scholarship was universally acknowledged by the Fathers of the Council of Trent, is the most reliable interpreter of abstruse passages of the Bible, chiefly of Isaias, when the difficulty arises from the obscurity of the original text. The best modern Protestant exegetists, relying most of the time on the comments of Jewish Rabbis, and on their realistic theories, cannot compare with the deep and detailed grammatical and etymological criticism of Father Foreiro, who knew how little confidence is to be placed in modern Rabbis. Hear him :

" The burden of Tyre : Howl ye, ships of Tarsis ; for Tyre is destroyed within and without. The news of it has come from the land of *Kittim*.

" Be silent, ye that dwell in the island [of Tyre]. The merchants of Sidon passing over the sea, used to fill it.

" Over the sea, the grain from the country of the Nile, the Egyptian harvest, brought down along that great river, came to feed her ; and she had become the mart of the nations.

" Fear and blush, O Sidon ; for the sea speaketh, the fortified strength of the sea, saying : Did I not suffer the pains of labor ? Did I not bring forth and nourish young men ? Did I not see my young virgins grow up to womanhood, and going abroad to colonize ? Thus shall it happen to thee, O Sidon.

“When it will be heard in Egypt, they shall lament over the fate of Tyre.

“Go in exile to Tarsis ; howl ye all inhabitants of the isle.”

Could it be possible to describe more impressively the power of the Phœnicians on the sea ? their commerce with Egypt and all over the Mediterranean ? their colonies of Carthage, of Spain, and of numerous islands where they sent their young men and young maidens ? The only omission we can perceive is that of their trade on the ocean, on the north along the coast of Western Europe, and on the south along Western Africa ; but Isaias was only concerned about the nations holding intercourse with Jewish Palestine.

After Phœnicia sufficient mention must be made of Babylon, whither the Jews had not so far been taken captive, yet of whose destruction he was to give such a powerful and precise statement. Here, however, the principal object must be to find out, in the words of the prophet, the characteristics of the Babylonians.

The first is their effeminacy. The description of their loose and dissolute manners, given by ancient historians, is well known ; but Isaias was the first to point it out distinctly. On the day of her destruction Babylon is compared to a timid doe flying away.\* She is called in the Douai version, “glorious among kingdoms ;” but the Hebrew (*tsebi*) means literally “voluptuous,” “the delight of kingdoms.” The same character of the great Chaldean city is much more forcibly expressed in the forty-seventh chapter :

“Come down, sit in the dust, O virgin, daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground ; there is no throne any more for the daughter of the Chaldeans ; for thou shalt no more be called delicate and tender.

“Take a millstone and grind meal ; uncover thy shame, strip thy shoulders, make bare thy legs ; pass over rivers. . . .

“Sit thou silent, O daughter of the Chaldeans ; thou shalt no more be called the lady, the queen of kingdoms. . . .

“Thou hast said : I shall be a lady forever. . . . Thou hast not remembered thy latter end.

“And now hear these things, thou that art delicate. . . . that sayest in thy heart : I am, and there is none else beside me ; I shall not sit as a widow ; I shall not know barrenness.”

The second characteristic of the Babylonians was their science, particularly that of astrology, so celebrated in antiquity all over

the East. In the opinion of all, they could predict the future ; nothing was concealed from them ; their wisdom was proverbial. No one knew it as well as Isaias ; but he knew also that it was a fallacy, a delusion and a snare. Hear him :\*

“ All evils are come upon thee, because of the multitude of thy sorceries, and on account of the dense array of thy enchanters.

“ And thou hast trusted in thy wickedness, and hast said : There is none that seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge it is that hast deceived thee.

“ Evil shall come upon thee, and thou shalt not know the rising thereof ; and calamity shall fall violently upon thee, which thou canst not keep off ; misery shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.

“ Stand now with thy enchanters, and with the multitude of thy sorcerers, in which thou hast labored from thy youth, if so be it they may profit thee anything. . . .

“ Thou hast failed in the multitude of thy counsels ; let now the astrologers stand and save thee, they that gazed at the stars, and counted the months, that from them they might tell the things that shall come to thee.

“ Behold, they are as stubble ; fire hath burned them ; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flames.”

The third and last characteristic of the Babylonians was their disgraceful idolatry. The worship of false gods began most probably at Babylon, and was introduced by Nimrod himself. The prophet in a few bold strokes describes the gods of gold and silver, carried in procession by the Chaldeans :

“ Bel is broken, Nabo is destroyed ; the idols of the Babylonians are put upon the back of beasts and cattle ; they weary down by their heavy weight the dumb animals which carry them.

“ These gods are now broken in pieces ; they could not save those that bore them, and they themselves shall go into captivity. . . .

“ You that contribute gold out of a bag, and weigh out silver in the scales ; and hire a goldsmith to make a god ; and then fall down and worship ;

“ They bear the god on their shoulders and carry him, and set him in his place and he shall stand, and shall not stir out of it. Yea, when they shall cry unto him, he shall not hear ; he shall not save them from tribulation.

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\* Isaias xlvi. 9, et seq.

“Remember this, and blush for shame.”

We doubt again if it could have been possible to describe more accurately the renowned people of Chaldea. The prophet saw intuitively the great features of a nation, and wrote down what he had seen ; and the faithful image is conveyed down the stream of ages to the remotest posterity.

This is perhaps more remarkable still for the Egyptians, on whom a word must suffice. They lived by the Nile, and without this river their country would have been a desert ; they were renowned for their wisdom, their antiquity, and the gigantic monuments and colossal statues which encumbered their soil. All this is expressed in a few lines :

First, the Nile :\* “The river shall be wasted and dry.

“It shall fail ; and the banks of its canals shall fall away and dry up ; the reed and the bulrush shall wither away.

“The channel of the river shall be laid bare from its fountain-head down ; and all grains sowed along its banks shall dry up, wither away, and be no more.

“The fishermen also shall mourn ; and all that cast a hook into the river shall lament ; and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish away.

“They shall be confounded that wrought in flax, combing and weaving fine linen.†

“And all watery places shall be dry ; and they shall mourn that made ponds to take fishes.”

Secondly, let us hear of the Egyptian wisdom so celebrated in antiquity :

“The princes of Tanis have become fools ; the wise counselors of Pharaoh have given senseless counsels. . . .

“Where are now thy wise men ? let them tell thee and show what the Lord of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt.

“The princes of Tanis are become fools ; the princes of Memphis are gone astray ; they have deceived Egypt, the stay of the people thereof.

“The Lord hath mingled in the midst thereof the spirit of giddiness ; and they have caused Egypt to err in all its doings, as a strong man staggereth and vomiteth.”

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\* Isaías xix. et seq.

† A great industry in Egypt ; we know the linen of their mummies.

As to the antiquity of which they boasted, it was mainly expressed by the number and length of their dynasties ; and in our day, after many attempts by archaeologists, chiefly of the anti-Christian school, to prove it by astronomy, geology, and other modern sciences, it is yet on the Manetho dynasties that modern historians rely absolutely to settle a real chronology of Egypt. Isaias already understood it ; and intending to prove how the advisers of the Egyptian kings deceived them as to the *future* by pointing out to the *past*, he did not make them refer to the physical science of their learned men, namely, to the zodiacs described on their monuments, as proofs of their most ancient study of the heavens, the same as French "savans" did at the beginning of this century ; nor to the alluvial soil of the country as an argument in favor of the same fabulous antiquity, as did Herodotus on the report of the priests of his time ; but, having a better insight of truth, he merely made them allude to the long succession of their ancestors ; and the whole was expressed in a single phrase :

"The counselors of Pharaoh have given him foolish counsel. How will they say to Pharaoh : I am the son of wise ancestors ; I am the son of *ancient* kings ?" \*

"The flatterers of the kings," says justly Father Foreiro on this text, "extolled as high as heaven their kingly wisdom and the most ancient nobility of their race ; they advised them not to fear ; that their empire would last forever, as it was the most ancient on earth : and had been for so long a time based on the most supreme wisdom." If the dynasties of Manetho, of which so much is said in our time, are not mentioned here, the reason was simply that Manetho's future existence was not yet dreamt of, since he wrote his celebrated book only several centuries later ; but certainly the same idea is expressed by the Hebrew prophet.

Finally, a single word also suffices to Isaias for depicting that remarkable feature of Egypt, its idolatrous monuments and statues : "Behold, the Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud, and will enter into Egypt, and the *idols* of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst thereof." †

The word expressed in the Douai version by *idols*, and in the Vulgate by *simulachra*, does not mean only the statues of the gods, but likewise the temples and monuments dedicated to an idolatrous wor-

\* Ver. 11.

† Ver. 1.

ship (*elili, vana*, etc.); hence Father C. a Lapide, commenting on this passage, says expressly: "The Assyrians, Isaias foretells, will despoil and devastate the temples, and the gods of gold and silver of the Egyptians, and will take them captive to Babylon, together with the inhabitants, as Jeremias relates it happened later on." \*

The sight of the remains of those massive fabrics bears, even in our day, an aspect so palpably idolatrous, that when England invaded Egypt at the beginning of this century, to drive away the French, and landed on the banks of the Nile several Sepoy regiments, the Hindoos prostrated themselves at once, and worshiped their gods at the first sight of those wonderful ruins. As it is the first and grandest object that strikes the beholder on his entrance into the country, the Hebrew prophet very appropriately makes mention of it in the very first line of the chapter he devotes to the subject. As to the descriptions drawn by Isaias of the Persians, Ethiopians, Assyrians, etc., in his chapters seventh, tenth, eighteenth, twenty-first, twenty-second, and forty-fifth, it is useless to weary thereby the reader; the object had in view has been sufficiently attained by the previous reflections. No one can possibly deny the powerful accuracy of the prophet in all his sketches; no one will refuse him the title of a great ethnographer, as he was undoubtedly a true prophet. He was so to such an extent that some modern German expounders of the Bible, having beforehand settled in their mind that every text of Scripture bearing a supernatural and truly prophetic character must be discarded or explained away, have gone so far as to maintain, without giving any sufficient proof of it, that the sixty-six chapters attributed to Isaias in the Old Testament are not his own; that he may have written a few, but the most of them were the work of subsequent writers who lived after the events related in those prophecies had already happened. Of this they give no other proof than a pretended dissimilarity of style, predicated only on a few expressions which cannot be found in any other passage of the poems; as if the richness of the Hebrew poetry, so remarkable for any one acquainted with that language, did not sufficiently account for this diversity, or, if you wish, dissimilarity. Thus, of course, the forty-fifth chapter, where the prophet calls Cyrus by name two centuries at least before the Persian king lived,

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\* Jer. xlivi. 12.

must, they say, have been written by a later author, who successfully foisted his own composition as a part and parcel of those of Isaias. We need not enter into such a discussion ; for the attempt to brand with the character of forgery the most sublime effusions that ever gushed forth from genius and holiness, is too fanciful and flimsy to be even honored by a discussion of any kind, although with the intention of refuting it.

Before coming, however, to the second part of the prophecies of Isaias, where the character of universality and sanctity of the future Christian Church is so admirably portrayed, we must yet stop a moment to remark simply that the same extracts which have been given in part of those sublime descriptions of ancient nations, contain not only individual predictions of future events pertaining to their national life, but likewise positive assertions of the prospective conversion of these peoples to the worship of the true God ; and since this peculiarity is precisely the great object pursued in these pages, a few words on the subject will not be devoid of interest.

Of these we will select what the prophet foretells of the Ethiopians, the Phœnicians or Tyrians, the Persians, and the Egyptians. Others might be likewise quoted, but we must limit ourselves to the most important. Of the ethnical description of the first—the Ethiopians—by Isaias we have not yet spoken, because of the obscurity of the eighteenth chapter, where the prophet speaks of them according to all interpreters. But their conversion to Christianity is so clearly announced that it cannot be passed over entirely. It is chiefly the seventh or last verse of the chapter which contains the prediction. The translation of it given by the Douai version from the Vulgate is in itself striking : “At that time shall a present be brought to the Lord of hosts, from a people [the Ethiopians] rent and torn in pieces ; from a terrible people, after which there hath been no other ; from a nation expecting, expecting and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the Lord of hosts, to Mount Sion.” But Father Foreiro, after an interesting discussion of all the difficult passages of this chapter, drawing, often, unexpected light from his deep knowledge of Hebrew, comments on it in this wise : “The king of the Ethiopians had sent ambassadors to the Jews in Palestine, either down the Nile, or through the Red Sea, promising his help against an Assyrian invasion ; and the prophet announced at the same time the disastrous result of this coalition, and the future conversion of the [Ethiopian] nation to

Christ ; 'Alas, unfortunate country. . . . . Thou wast accustomed to send thy ambassadors through the sea ; thou hast promised help to the Jews, but thou hast perished with them ; yet it will not be forever. Go ye, my swift ambassadors [namely, my apostles] to that nation rent and torn in pieces, to that people of a terrible aspect and barbarous customs, the farthest of all that are known, whose land is so often devastated by the rivers [the various affluents of the Nile] and who hast so often to use the line and level over thy soil ; go, and preach to them the good news ; from Sion light cometh ; they shall go to the Mount of Sion,' etc." Although undoubtedly this chapter is obscure, and can give rise to discussion and doubt, its last verse at least seems clear, and no other interpretation can be given of it but that of Father Foreiro, with which generally Catholic interpreters agree. The learned Portuguese Dominican supports it with so many proofs, derived not only from this chapter, but also from texts of other sacred writers on the Ethiopians, that no adverse opinion is possible, unless we prefer to say that the passage must be altogether given up as unintelligible.

The same may be said of the prediction that the day would come when the Tyrians, so long addicted to trade for their own selfish uses, would consecrate their wealth to the Lord, become converts to Christianity, and help the propagation of the Gospel by their abundant means. The prophecy is contained in the eighteenth verse of the twenty-third chapter, thus rendered in the Douai version : "Her merchandise and her hire shall be sanctified to the Lord ; they shall not be kept in store, nor laid up ; for her merchandise shall be for them that shall dwell before the Lord, that they may eat unto fullness, and be clothed for a continuance." St. Jerome understands this passage as we do ; F. C. a Lapide thinks it is the most satisfactory interpretation, and refers as a proof of it to the fact that David himself had foretold the same event when he said : "*Filiæ Tyri in muneribus, vultum tuum deprecabuntur,*" etc.

Of the Persians the forty-fifth chapter speaks in terms of the highest sublimity. The reason is that, to the eyes of the prophet, Cyrus, whom he names at the very beginning of this poem, becomes a type of the Messiah, and both are so thoroughly united together, that what was said previously of David as a Messianic type becomes true likewise of the Persian hero. It will suffice to quote the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth verses, as expressive of this great feature. The deliverance of the Jews by Cyrus from the captivity of Babylon

becomes thus the sure warrant of the freedom of all nations from the servitude of sin, by Christ the Saviour.

“I have raised him [Cyrus] up to justice, and I will direct all his ways ; he shall build my city, and let go my captives, not for ransom, not for presents, saith the Lord the God of hosts.

“Thus saith the Lord : The labor of Egypt, and the merchandise of Ethiopia, and of Sabaim men of stature, shall come over to thee, and shall be thine”—to Cyrus as a type, to the Saviour-God as a reality. “They shall walk after thee, they shall be bound with manacles ; and they shall worship thee, and shall make supplication to thee. Only in thee is God, and there is no God besides thee.

“Verily, thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour.”

This last phrase requires no comment, and there can be no mention of Cyrus in it ; but the gentle gradation from a mere human event at the beginning of verse thirteenth, to the supernatural and sublime acme of ecstasical prophecy contained in the last line, shows the reader better than any explanation would do, the mutual play of type and antitype, of figure and reality, of a mere human face concealing the features of the divine.

What Isaias says of the future conversion of the Egyptians has been reserved for our last remarks on the subject, on account of the most astonishing details contained in it. The reader knows that the whole Egyptian nation was converted to the Christian religion before the fifth century, with circumstances of the most extraordinary kind ; several of them must be presently given in the surprising words of Isaias.

After having described the country of the Pharaohs in its most important characteristics ; in its great river, its stupendous monuments, the proverbial wisdom of its wise men, and the great antiquity of its kings ; after having foretold unexampled calamities, and the destruction of everything which made this nation illustrious, the prophet passes suddenly to a theme altogether different. He foretells a complete change of religion, from idolatry to the pure worship of the Lord ; he speaks of cities where the true God shall be adored ; he names one of them—Heliopolis—with peculiar characters of a striking nature ; he announces a religious and social union between nations divided previously beyond all possible hope ; Assyria, Egypt, and Palestine. We will give first the text of the Douai version, and briefly comment upon it, beginning from the eighteenth verse of chapter nineteenth.

“In that day there shall be five cities in the land of Egypt, speaking the language of Canaan, and swearing by the Lord of hosts : one shall be the city of the sun [Heliopolis].

“In that day there shall be an altar of the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a monument of the Lord on the borders thereof.

“It shall be for a sign, and for a testimony of the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt. For they shall cry to the Lord because of the oppressor, and he shall send them a Saviour and a defender to deliver them.

“And the Lord shall be known by Egypt ; and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall worship him with sacrifices and offerings ; and they shall make vows to the Lord, and perform them.

“And the Lord shall strike Egypt with a scourge, and shall heal it ; and they shall return to the Lord, and he shall be pacified toward them, and heal them.

“In that day there shall be a way from Egypt to the Assyrians ; and the Assyrians shall enter into Egypt ; and the Egyptian to the Assyrians ; and the Egyptians shall serve the Assyrians.

“In that day shall Israel be the third to the Egyptian and the Assyrian : a blessing in the midst of the land

“Which the Lord of hosts hath blessed, saying : Blessed be my people of Egypt, and the work of my hands to the Assyrians ; but Israel is my inheritance.”

This is a perfect picture, and in its general outlines it is most striking, after the details of woe the prophet had previously portrayed. Still, some peculiarities of the text require comment, and the whole becomes yet more wonderful when they are attended to.

Cornelius a Lapide thinks that in mentioning *five* cities, the prophet used a definite for an indefinite number. Other interpreters of Scripture suppose them to be the five chief cities of Egypt : Memphis, Tanis, Thebes, Bubastis, and Heliopolis. Alexandria did not exist when Isaias lived. But he names particularly Heliopolis, for what reason ? It is known that it was the great sacerdotal metropolis of the whole country. It was inhabited mainly by the priestly caste, contained many temples, and was also celebrated for its schools ; so that the Greeks went chiefly to Heliopolis when they wished to become acquainted with Egyptian wisdom. Solon, Plato, Herodotus, Eudoxus, and other Hellenes resided in it. When Strabo visited it,

it had lost much of its splendor ; yet the priests with whom he became acquainted showed him the halls where Eudoxus and Plato had spent, according to them, thirteen years learning Egyptian wisdom.\* Many Jews likewise lived in it, as it was a very important town, not very far from Palestine. Under the Ptolemies, Onias, a Hebrew high-priest, obtained permission to build in it a temple for his countrymen, in which, however, most of these refused to worship, as it was against the prescriptions of the law to erect temples out of Jerusalem. But the number of Jews residing at Heliopolis and in the towns nearer Palestine was always so large, that, according to St. Jerome, the Syriac tongue was understood generally by their inhabitants, and thus according to him was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaia, that there should be “five cities in the land of Egypt speaking the tongue of Canaan.”

The language of the prophet in the following verses is so comprehensive and at the same time precise, that nothing but the complete conversion of Egypt could have fulfilled his predictions. And we know that a short time after the preaching of St. Mark in Alexandria, Christianity flourished already in Lower Egypt ; the persecutions under the Roman emperors drove to the deserts around Thebes a large number of Christians, and became the occasion of the establishment of monachism in the East ; so that, as usual, the fury of the enemies of the new religion became the cause of its dissemination.

Soon, therefore, after the peace of Constantine, the whole country was found to be Christian, and covered with religious houses whose reputation for holiness and miracles spread to the farthest limits of the empire. The *Confessions* of St. Augustine tell us that many pagans were converted by reading the lives of the Fathers of the desert, written by St. Athanasius and translated by St. Jerome ; and that on one occasion two great lords of the court of the emperor, friends of St. Augustine, became Christians, and adopted a life of austerity, moved to it by such reading. The number of monasteries, the austerities of the monks, their profound wisdom and sanctity, attracted to the new religion whomsoever had not yet embraced it. People went from a great distance to witness what the general report had presented in such vivid colors. Among those who undertook long travels for such purpose, Baronius, in the third

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\* Lib. xvii.

volume of his *Annals*,\* quotes at length Evagrius of Pontus, who in the fourth century resided for some time at Oxyryynchus, north of Thebes, and was surprised to see that the reality was yet far above what he had read. "We found," he says, "the city full of monks within its walls, and the whole country around swarming with them. The ancient public edifices, and the temples of an old superstition, had been changed into dwellings for religious persons, and in the town itself there were many more monasteries than houses. In the city, which is both large and populous, there are twelve churches for public worship, besides private oratories for the use of the monks. Around the gates, and the towers, and in every angle of the walls, are constructed monkish dwellings, so that there is no spot in the city where you do not hear hymns and praises to God, going on night and day; the city in fact may be called a huge church.

..... The magistrates and the chief citizens have established guardians and inspectors, to find out the newly-arrived pilgrims, chiefly the poor, in order to take them in charge and provide for their wants. How could I express the charity they manifested toward me as soon as they knew I had arrived? How could I speak becomingly of their religious of both sexes who fill the city? On information we learned from the holy bishop of the place that it contained twenty thousand virgins and ten thousand monks; and indeed the great difficulty to find a hospitable roof among them, was in deciding among so many who claimed the privilege of having us, and might have torn our cloak in their efforts to take possession of our person."

All know what Mr. Lecky has said in his *History of European Morals*, in disparagement of these Egyptian monasteries; all are aware of his having culled from the large collection of Father Rosweide several facts which to a modern European appear strange and even shocking, to conclude that "morality" had not gained anything by the establishment of Christianity in Egypt. This is not the place to examine the question; there is room only for a very few observations. Later on the subject will come again for a full and thorough discussion.

If the "asceticism" of Egyptian monks was, generally, as revolting as Mr. Lecky describes it, how could the report of it have filled, at the time, the whole of Europe with admiration and a kind of holy

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\* Edit. Plant. 1598, p. 157.

enthusiasm? Were the Romans of the fourth century less refined than the Europeans of the nineteenth? If the reader of these old stories must necessarily in our day recoil with disgust at perusing what they say of the filthiness, unnatural feeling, and inhuman customs of those "Fathers of the desert," was the recital of it, in the time of St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, less calculated to shock and offend the good taste then prevailing? How could the facts related by Athanasius, and Jerome, and Palladius, and Rufinus, and Evagrius, have produced under Valentinian such a deep impression in favor of Christianity, when such readers as Mr. Lecky find their "morality" low and groveling, and greatly inferior to the philosophy of the Antonines?

We put it to Mr. Lecky himself; for he is generally actuated by fairness, and follows the dictates of a right judgment:—Did he find in the collection of Father Rosweide ("De vita et verbis seniorum") only proofs of "moral degradation"? Could he not have culled from the book of the "Father of the Bollandists" thousands of traits of true virtue, real holiness, astonishing purity? He feels constrained to say himself that it is a "fascinating book;" it would not be certainly, if it were only replete with the offensive specimens he gives of it. And even with respect to the astounding facts he records, particularly that of St. Simeon Stylites, the author of *European Morals* might have said to himself that a truly holy man living in Palestine or Egypt, in the fourth or fifth century, was not necessitated to use a standard of exterior morals altogether identical with that of modern culture. The strange austerities of the great *Stylites* were more calculated to impress the corrupt generations of those ages with the awe necessary for their reformation, and better adapted to the moral wants of those Eastern populations than perhaps the solemn exterior of a well-dressed Methodist preacher. In fact we hear from contemporary writers that not only the dregs of society crowded around the pillar of Simeon, but the great, the learned, the wealthy came also to ask his advice and recommended themselves to his prayers.

But this is a digression which does not touch the object under consideration at this moment. We have just seen previous to it how exactly Isaías had foretold the total conversion of Egypt, when he said so many ages before:

"The Lord shall be known by Egypt, and the Egyptian shall know the Lord in that day, and shall worship him with sacrifices

and offerings ; and they shall make vows to the Lord and perform them."

The last part of the prophecy, in which mention is made of a complete facility of intercourse between Assyria, Egypt, and Judea, requires only a word of explanation. The prophet most probably did not intend to limit his remarks to these three peoples. It was not among them only that there should be social, commercial, and religious intercommunication.

Isaias spoke often in his writings of the divisions which existed in his time between these particular nations, under all these aspects. Many of his exhortations or threats were addressed to the Jews, to warn them against political alliances with idolatrous peoples, chiefly with either Assyria or Egypt, between which Palestine is placed geographically. In predicting the conversion of the country of the Pharaohs, he announces that the time would come when the barriers then raised by religion between all nations should be thrown down and shattered. Free intercourse would then exist between races so long kept apart by the superstitions of idolatry, and the exclusiveness natural to national and false religions. Egypt, Assyria, and Palestine were thus topics of the hour ; their future union would typify that of all nations.

The path is finally cleared away ; and it will henceforth be comparatively easy to follow the great Hebrew prophet in the sublime flight of his inspiration, and to understand thoroughly what he says, in the second part of his work, of the future Universal Church which he there describes so accurately. To this conclusion of the present chapter we now turn our attention.

#### 9. *Prophecies of Isaias concerning the future conversion of nations.*

From the fortieth to the sixty-sixth chapter, both inclusive, Isaias seems to swim away on a constant and undisturbed stream of inspiration. Wave follows wave, thought presses forward on thought, and flashes of the most sublime genius illumine constantly the glorious path of the seer. According to some modern exegetists, the twenty-seven chapters included in this second part of the prophet's work, can be divided into three equal parts each of nine chapters. It is hard to perceive the ground of this opinion.

The holy man is carried on by the free outburst of the Spirit of God ; and the pretended trilogy disappears before our eyes into the magnificent display of the same ever-recurring thoughts, but always

presented in a new, most bright, and unexpected form. With the exception of the first verses of the forty-fifth chapter, which allude to Cyrus, and of the whole forty-seventh, in which the future destruction of Babylon is described, the entire effusion of the divine poet offers scarcely any particular object of a special prophecy. The whole of it is a great picture dealing apparently in generalities, yet so bright and so clear that each outline is strongly defined, and brings before the reader some trait of the future with the most astonishing accuracy and precision.

The character of the Messiah, the vocation of the Gentiles, and universality of the Christian Church, the destruction of idolatry then so prevalent, and finally and most prominently, the destiny of the Jewish nation, either in the obstinacy of the greatest number, or the conversion of a small portion of them, and at last the return to the true God of the whole race at the end of this world ; these are the noble objects offered to the eyes of Isaias by God himself, the only source of true inspiration, and expressed in words which have never been surpassed in splendor. We have thus in a few pages of the Bible a complete history of the future as it appeared to the great Son of Amos, a part of which—the greatest—has been fulfilled before our day, a sure warrant that the remainder is destined to be likewise accomplished.

In this vast picture the only part of consequence at this moment regards the vocation of the Gentiles and the universality of the Christian Church. To this we come at last with the consciousness that the previous predictions made to the patriarchs, to Balaam, to Tobias, and to David, pale in the presence of this new, dazzling light. Many other passages of Isaias on the conversion of the nations could be quoted from the first part of his prophecies, and mention has already been made of the remarkable prediction concerning Egypt ; but it is proper to record for the present only extracts from the second part, namely, from the fortieth chapter down to the last, because this forms a whole having no other object than to describe the future coming of the Messiah, and its effect on the nations in general, on their idolatrous worship, and on the Jewish people in particular. Everywhere else in Holy Scripture when God speaks through the prophets, it is in the midst of circumstances which often have no direct bearing on these prophecies ; it is frequently only a phrase or a few paragraphs, convincing enough for the Christian or the man persuaded of the divine origin of revelation ; but offering to the unbeliever, the caviler, or the indifferent, pretexts

called by them reasons for rejecting or doubting the purport of those predictions. Meanings different from the obvious one are always looked for, and found often with an appearance of probability calculated to weaken or even hinder faith. In the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaias none of those plausible difficulties can exist. There can be but one meaning ; the prophet speaks of the future Messiah and of his Church, or he speaks nonsense. Not only would it be blasphemous to use such a word as this, but it would be the effect of a complete obliquity of judgment to apply it to a long effusion of sublime thoughts, clothed in the most brilliant style, and surpassing in beauty whatever else has been written by man. And although so much elevated above the common range of human minds, yet the purpose of this admirable poetry is clear ; the thoughts are so often repeated, presented under so many various and brilliant shapes, yet always offering to the intellect such well-defined and precise sense, that it would be absurd to refuse one's assent, and reject the whole as beyond the reach of comprehension. Consequently those exegetists who are naturally brought to understand the cogency of these reflections, yet are not prepared to accept what is so clear and forcible, because of an unfortunate determination on their part to reject whatever is purely supernatural and divine, are reduced to the necessity of pretending that this splendid effort of human genius is merely a patchwork of a great many vague Messianic forebodings, written by several authors, at different times, with numerous special objects in view, and subsequently reduced to the state of a *cento* in the form we have it, by Esdras or some other compiler.

There is no need of refuting this last view of the subject. No proof is given of the assertion, and it is sufficient to deny it. The supposition would go to establish a universal skepticism in ancient literature. As well may we admit that the poems of Homer or of Virgil are likewise *centos* elaborated by the monks of the middle ages, as Father Hardouin seriously pretended to the great enjoyment of all men given to levity ; or, to make a more appropriate comparison, we might as well maintain that the poem of Job was also composed, in after ages, of scraps and bits of miscellaneous writings, connected together by some Arabian literary compiler, whose name has not come down to posterity. No exegetist of repute will ever be able to take away from Isaias the authorship of his last twenty-seven chapters. Any impartial man who reads them says at once that they

were poured out as a pure stream from one great mind directed by the Spirit of God.

On this account they are all-sufficient to establish the belief in the highest antiquity, among the Jews at least, of a future universal society spread through all nations, worshiping the same God, taught by the same Saviour, and knit together in the bonds of the same faith and love. Let us hear, therefore, some slight description of that great Catholic Society, since the whole of it in Isaias would exceed our limits.

God himself, addressing the future Messiah by the lips of the prophet, says clearly,\* “It is a small thing that thou shouldst be my servant only to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to convert the dregs of Israel. Behold I have given thee to be the light of the Gentiles, that thou mayest be salvation even to the farthest parts of the earth. . . .

“In an acceptable time I have heard thee, and in the day of salvation I have helped thee; and I have preserved thee, and given thee to be a covenant of the people, that thou mightest raise up the earth, and possess the inheritances that were destroyed;

“That thou mightest say to them that are bound, Come forth; and to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in every plain.

“They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor the sun strike them; for he that is merciful to them shall be their shepherd, and at the fountain of waters he shall give them drink.”

Thus all nations shall be called, and drink of the waters of truth, and come from darkness, and be free from spiritual bondage. It is not for the tribes of Israel alone that the Messiah shall come, but “to raise up the earth, and possess the inheritances that were destroyed.” And to show better still the difference between the insignificant flock of Israel in the old dispensation, and the all-embracing fold of Christ in the new, we have the well-known exulting strains which the soul of the Christian listens to with rapture, even after having heard them a thousand times: † “Give praise, O thou barren that barest not; sing forth praise, and intone a joyful song, thou that didst not travail with child: many are the children of the desolate, more than of her that hath a husband, saith the Lord.

“Enlarge the place of thy tents, and stretch out the skins of thy

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\* Isaias xlix. 6, et seq.

† Isaias liv. 1, et seq.

tabernacles ; spare not ; lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.

“ For thou shalt pass on to the right hand and to the left ; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and shall inhabit the desolate cities.

“ Fear not, for thou shalt not be confounded, nor blush. . . .

“ For he that made thee shall rule over thee ; the Lord of hosts is his name : and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, shall be called the Lord of all the earth.”

The *barren* wife, the *desolate*, as she is called in verse one, namely, the Church of the Gentiles, which, on account of idolatry, did not bear children to God, was destined to have more sons and bring forth more children to the Almighty than the Church of Israel whose husband the Lord had always been. But as it is, after all, always the same “congregation of the faithful,” the same mystic body,—in patriarchal times, under the old dispensation, or in the new,—the innumerable children whom the Church of the Gentiles were to bring forth would be at the same time the posterity of the Church of Israel ; Jerusalem would be able to glory over them as being born of her : \*

“ Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

“ For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and a mist the people ; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

“ And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising.

“ Lift up thy eyes round about, and see ; all these are gathered together, they are come to thee ; thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side.

“ Then shalt thou see and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee, the strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee.

“ The multitude of camels shall cover thee. . . .

“ All the flocks of cedar shall be gathered unto thee. . . .

“ Who are these that fly as clouds, and as doves to their windows ?

“ For the islands wait for me, and the ships of the sea in the beginning, that I may bring thy sons from afar.”

Then indeed, as the prophet relates a few chapters previous, Jeru-

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\* Chap. ix. 1, et seq.

salem—the Jewish Church—shall be herself astonished at her fecundity; she will exclaim : \* “The place is too narrow for me, make me room to dwell in.

“And thou shalt say in thy heart: Who hath begotten these? I was barren and did not bring forth; led away and captive; and who hath brought up these? I was destitute and alone, and these where were they?”

As to the happiness of mankind under the rule of the “Holy One;” and the peace, the plenty, the superabundant spiritual joy that shall bless the universal Church, it is described in many passages of Isaías. We quote a few: † “I will open rivers in the high hills, and fountains in the midst of the plains; I will turn the desert into pools of waters, and the impassable lands into streams.

“I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, and the thorn, and the myrtle, and the olive tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, the elm, and the box tree together.

“That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.”

The Church shall not be only a garden, but also a city. ‡ “O poor little one, tossed with tempest, without any comfort, behold I will lay thy stones in order, and thy foundations with sapphires.

“And I will make thy bulwarks of jasper, and thy gates of graven stones, and all thy borders of desirable stones.

“All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

“And thou shalt be founded in justice; depart far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near to thee.”

We would have to copy from many chapters, were we to exhaust all the quotations of this nature; we will conclude with this last one from chapter sixty, verse thirteen, etc.: “The glory of Libanus shall come to thee, the fir tree and the box tree and the pine tree together; to beautify the place of my sanctuary.

“And the children of those that afflicted thee shall come bowing down to thee, and all that slandered thee shall worship the steps of

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\* Chap. xlix. 20, et seq.

† Chap. xli. 18, et seq.

‡ Chap. liv. 11.

thy feet, and shall call thee the City of the Lord, the Sion of the Holy One of Israel.

“ Because thou wast forsaken and hated, and there was none that passed through thee, I will make thee to be an everlasting glory, a joy unto generation and generation.”

It would be superfluous to copy the celebrated passage of the eleventh chapter, verse sixth, etc. : “ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. . . . And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp ; and the weaned child shall thrust his hand into the den of the basilisk.” This became known to pagans even, and every one is acquainted with the beautiful Latin verses Virgil composed on the universal peace and glorious harmony of the reign of Astraea.

In our day, it is true, many men pretend that this has never been realized in the Church ; and if you believe them, the Christian religion enjoys no advantage, in point of morality and well-being, over idolaters and Mussulmans. When speaking in detail of the actual realization of those bright promises, it shall be our grateful duty to refer to this objection, and prove its futility. We shall certainly treat the question on some occasion or other.

These last considerations have, for a moment, turned away our mind from the contemplation of the universality of these blessings. Before concluding it is proper to return to it, and see again Isaias particularizing his descriptions, and becoming at the same time an ethnographer as well as a prophet. A few very remarkable passages will convince the reader of it.

#### 10. *Universality of this process of conversion.*

The first of these is taken from the forty-ninth chapter : \*

“ I will make all my mountains a way, and my paths shall be exalted.

“ Behold these shall come from afar ; and behold these from the north, and from the sea, and these from the south country.

“ Give praise, O ye heavens ; and rejoice, O earth,” etc.

These few words from the Douai version give scarcely any idea of what the text itself contains. The best is to have recourse to Father Cornelius a Lapide, who certainly surpasses himself in this passage of his Commentary.

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\* Ver. 11, et seq.

He first remarks that St. Jerome, Foreiro, and Sanchez understand the verse, "Behold," etc., of the four parts of the earth, because from all of these nations were to enter the Church. But although the authority of three such men can well carry conviction, as there is question of the interpretation of a passage of Scripture, F. a Lapide does not admit that the first phrase, "these shall come from afar," can refer only to the east, as they do. It means evidently, he says, a distant country from any point of the compass. It must refer to each member of the following phrase: "these from the north, and these from the sea, and these from the south country," meaning that in those various directions nations dwelling at a great distance shall enter the Church. The chief idea of the verse is that of remoteness.

What is said of nations coming from the north and from the sea, can offer no difficulty; the sea means here the west, because the Mediterranean stands west of Palestine; but the most important and difficult part of the verse is the last, which the Douai version translates by "the south country." It is in this discussion that Father a Lapide shows his science and skill. He proves at length that there can be no other meaning acceptable but *China*. He has succeeded in convincing not only the Catholic expositors in general, but even the majority of Protestants, who now adopt his interpretation. The reader can look at this very interesting discussion.

The word which causes all the difficulty is, in Hebrew, *Sinim*. It is, it seems, used nowhere else in Scripture with the plural termination *im*; the singular, *Sin*, means *Pelusium*, a very near city to Palestine, not a distant country as the whole verse supposes. The same may be said of *Sini*, which signifies Mount Sina and the country around, just on the southern borders of Judea. Evidently those words can have no reference to *Sinim*. The Septuagint, on whom alone we could now rely for the traditional meaning of the word, were evidently perplexed. Under Ptolemy Lagus—the time of the Septuagint—the Jews knew nothing, and could know nothing, of China. It is probable that by a tradition yet existing they understood the word *Sinim* meant a very distant country toward the southeast. The successors of Alexander, chiefly the Syrian Seleucidae, had opened by conquest and commerce a great intercourse with the East; but the Persian Empire, subdued by Alexander, and kept by his successors to a certain extent, did not reach farther than India, of which it embraced the northwestern provinces; consequently, the Septua-

gint thought they could translate the word *Sinim*, by Persia, the most remote region they knew, and they wrote εἰν γῆς Περσῶν. They could not think of Pelusium, nor of Mount Sina, on account of their proximity to Palestine ; and this reason likewise induces modern interpreters to look for the country mentioned by Isaias in a very different and more remote situation. William Gesenius, in his *Lexicon*, explains in a few words the reasons why China should be adopted. "The context," he says, "implies a remote country situated in the eastern or southern extremity of the earth ; probably the *Sinenses*, Chinese, whose country is *Sina*, China."

"This very ancient and celebrated people was known to the Arabians (and Syrians ?) by the name of *Sin*, *Tsini* ; and a Hebrew writer might well have heard of them, especially if sojourning in Babylon, the metropolis, as it were, of all Asia. This name appears to have been given to the Chinese by the other Asiatics ; for the Chinese themselves, though not unacquainted with it, do not employ it ; either adopting the names of the reigning dynasties, or ostentatiously assuming high-sounding titles, e. g., *Tchung-kue*, 'Central Empire,' etc. But *when* this name was thus given them by other nations, and *whence* it was derived, is a matter of opinion. Not improbably the opinion of those writers is correct, who suppose the name to have come from the fourth dynasty called *Tshin*, which held the throne from 249 to 206 B.C.\* To say nothing of the people called *Tshinas*, and spoken of in the laws of Menu, the name of this dynasty may have become widely known among foreign nations long before it acquired the sovereign power over all China."

We have gladly indulged in this short dissertation, because, besides its appropriateness to the subject, it is a new proof of the fact that the Bible is among ancient writings a sure source of ethnical knowledge. And to speak only of the matter under consideration, no stronger assertion could be made in the time of Isaias, of the future universality of the Church, than to *name* a people, then perfectly unknown, living at the eastern extremity of Asia, and say, "they also will enter its gates."

It is said in opposition that China has not yet, at this late time, entered, and remains what it always was : a rationalist country in its upper classes, and a pagan people in its lower orders. But at least

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\* See Du Halde. *Descr. de la Ch.* t. i., § 1, and page 806 ; and Abel Remusat *Nouv. Mélang. Asiat.* t. ii., p. 834, sq.

it has furnished many illustrious members to the Church, and at this day, the number of Christians increases rapidly in that far-distant country. The names of its martyrs alone would fill many pages ; and a church of martyrs is very near becoming a triumphant church. But this may be discussed later on more appropriately when considering the realization of the ancient prophecies. It is enough to remark, on this occasion, that the predictions of the Old Testament have never implied that all men should be converted. The proper meaning of the word Catholic does not in the least suppose it ; but the promise alone that a considerable number of people belonging to every nation under the sun would embrace a new religion, and profess the same faith, is sufficiently startling to require a supernatural source for the explanation of such a prediction.

What has already taken place in China with respect to Christianity can be as well regarded in the light of a fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaias, as the promises made in chapter the sixtieth can be said to contain a prediction in great part fulfilled with respect to Arabia. We read there the following words addressed to the Church :\*

“The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Madian and Ephra ; all they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense, and singing forth praise to the Lord.

“All the flocks of Cedar shall be gathered together unto thee ; the rams of Nabaioth shall minister to thee ; they shall be offered upon my respectable altar, and I will glorify the house of my majesty.”

All interpreters agree that this was in fact fulfilled when the wise men brought to the feet of Christ “gold, and frankincense, and myrrh ;” although Arabia has remained ever since almost closed to the messengers of God. Yet, before Mahometanism arose, large Christian communities existed in the country ; the same as exist in China at this time ; and not only some of the posterity of Madian and Ephra, but the Sabæans, the Nabathæans, and Cedarenians are mentioned by the prophet. The reader continues to perceive his extensive ethnical knowledge ; and the simplicity with which he affirms that men of the most dissimilar races, of the most divergent aptitudes and characters, would embrace the universal religion, suffices against the opinion of those who pretend that only a comparatively small number of races of men are apt to receive Christianity.

The total want of correctness of this opinion will in due time become evident to the reader.

But, moreover, the history of the world is not ended, and the Christian religion, which is just beginning to expand in many countries where it had before scarcely penetrated, has yet a great destiny to fulfill out of Europe and America. Asia, until this time, has been almost closed against it ; but this vast continent is now opening itself on all sides to receive messages of every sort knocking at her doors. The Christian message will not be the least efficacious among these, and between this century and the next great changes will undoubtedly take place in the religious belief and practice of Asiatics. What these changes will be the future will unfold. When to the noble efforts made at this day in that remote field by missionaries from France, Belgium, and Italy, the young clergy of the Philippine Islands and of Australia will be numerous enough to add their labors ; when the time assigned by Providence shall arrive, who can conjecture what the effect will be ? The Chinese race, in Anam at least, has given sufficient proofs of its maturity for receiving the Christian faith ; and the former enthusiasm of the Japanese for it may yet revive and astonish an incredulous world. Let the prayers of all good Christians hasten that glorious epoch of the future annals of Catholicity.

There remains for consideration a last passage of Isaias which cannot be omitted in these pages. It is, in fact, a *summary* of the whole book, and is contained in the sixty-sixth and last chapter. From the nineteenth verse down to the end a remarkable enumeration is made of various Gentile peoples which "are to be brought" by the help of Jewish messengers of God. There are in it difficulties of exegesis, but not insurmountable. This is the passage in the Douai version :

"I will set a sign among them, and I shall send of them that shall be saved, to the Gentiles into the sea, into Africa and Lydia, them that draw the bow ; into Italy and Greece, to the islands afar off, to them that have not heard of me, and have not seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory to the Gentiles.

"And they shall bring all your brethren out of all nations, for a gift to the Lord, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and on mules, and in coaches, to my holy mountain, Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as if the children of Israel should bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord.

“And I will take of them to be priests and Levites, saith the Lord.

“For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make to stand before me, saith the Lord ; so shall your seed stand and your name.

“And there shall be month after month, and sabbath after sabbath ; and all flesh shall come to adore before my face, saith the Lord.”

A last verse in the Vulgate is justly suppressed by Foreiro, because of its not being found in many MSS.

The “sign” which God is “to set” is most probably “the sign of the cross,” which messengers of the Gospel carry wherever they go. Other interpreters understand it either of the Christian churches erected by the first apostles in all countries, or of the sacraments, particularly of baptism and confirmation, which impress a supernatural character on those who receive them. The first interpretation is preferred because, in point of fact, the twelve from the beginning preached only “Christ crucified,” and from a very early epoch the material “sign of the cross” has been the most universal and ostensible emblem of religion ; so that wherever it is met with, people are sure there are Christians. In this passage, however, the precise meaning of that “sign” is immaterial.

But the following words, “I will send of them that shall be saved, to the Gentiles,” etc., contain one of the most important peculiarities of this prophecy. A great part of the chapter is devoted to foretelling that the mass of the Jewish nation would remain materially attached to the Mosaic law, would entirely abide by its exterior ceremonies, refuse to discontinue its bloody sacrifices, remain Jews in fact, and only Jews ; and that many of them would inwardly incline to superstition and idolatry. Rather than follow the Messiah, they would prefer the “sacrifices of oxen or of sheep,”\* or the “oblation of fine flour”—*simila* †—or stand by “the Temple.”‡ Meanwhile they would secretly pollute themselves by impure rites ;§ and at the same time ridicule the small number of their brethren who would put their trust in the Redeemer, and place their joy in the hope of heaven which he promises.”||

When this first part of the sixty-sixth chapter, whose text is not

\* Ver. 8.

† Ibid.

‡ Ver. 6.

§ Ver. 17.

|| Ver. 5.

reproduced here, is well studied, in all its details, it becomes evident that Isaias intends to portray the separation of the Jews, at the coming of the Messiah, into two classes: first, a large one intent on carnal views; blind to the true signs given by the prophets and foreshadowing his advent; resolved on regarding the Mosaic rites as eternal, and never to be amended or altered; and secondly, a much smaller class, enlightened on all those subjects, and exposing themselves to persecution for the sake of their new spiritual belief.\*

God announces openly that he will reject the sacrifices of the old dispensation; † turn against the mass of the nation adhering to it; † take the side of the small number of faithful Israelites; § and bring to the new Church composed chiefly of them—all the apostles were Jews—the immense multitude of the Gentiles, whom he would himself bring forth to life, by a most miraculous and unexpected “delivery.” ||

Then the tender love of the future Church for these new children is represented in the most glowing imagery, ¶ and the glory of the mystical Jerusalem shines forth mostly through this ardent charity: “Behold, I will bring upon her, as it were, a river of peace; and as an overflowing torrent, the glory of the Gentiles to whom you shall give suck. You [Gentiles] shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you.

“As one whom the mother caresses, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.”

This is admirably portrayed in several passages of the epistles of St. Paul, where he expresses so tenderly his feelings for the new children—his converts—whom the love of Christ brought forth, and placed upon his knees to be nourished and fostered by him and his fellow apostles.

This short retrospect on the beginning of this chapter was necessary for the understanding of the second part, which is the important one in this passage. It is thus easy to understand that when the prophet foretells that God “will send some of them that shall be saved to the Gentiles,” \*\* etc., he means to say that among that small number of faithful Israelites who would recognize the Messiah and follow him, some would be sent to preach him to the Gentiles, that is, the twelve apostles chosen by Christ purposely for such a purpose and

\* Ver. 5.

† Ver. 8.

‡ Ver. 4, 5, 6.

§ Ver. 5.

|| Ver. 7, 8, 9.

¶ Ver. 10, et seq.

\*\* Ver. 19.

other disciples. They would be sent to "all nations ;" but Isaias, as usual with him, mentions by name some of those nations which he describes graphically. Our attention must be chiefly brought to bear on the few interesting details he gives.

The Douai version says they would be sent, "to the Gentiles into the sea, into Africa, and Lydia, them that draw the bow ; into Italy and Greece, to the islands afar off, to them that have not heard of me, and have not seen my glory." To appreciate duly the deep meaning of this passage, some reference must be had to the Hebrew text, without the help of which these words can scarcely be understood. The "sea" in the Douai version is the translation of "Tarshish ;" "Africa" that of "Pul ;" "Lydia" of "Lud ;" "Italy" of "Tubal ;" and Greece of "Javan." What did the prophet really mean in mentioning these various countries ?

The most difficult is undoubtedly the first. The writer of the Vulgate had certainly some reasons for translating in this passage "Tarshish" by "the sea," but we do not know them. Foreiro thinks that Tarshish is here a mere compendium of the countries enumerated below : Pul, Lud, Tubal, etc. ; and that the meaning of this first Hebrew word is "*gentes ad quas per mare magnum transitur* ;" "all the nations to which the most easy access is through the sea." He, moreover, supposes that in this enumeration of races the prophet intended merely to mention those that were more thoroughly evangelized by the first apostles ; all of them being in Europe, North Africa, and Western Asia. This is certainly a very sensible interpretation, and seems a new proof of the correctness of his generalizations. Cornelius a Lapide does not even try to explain the word Tarshish.

There is no doubt that in the Old Testament it is employed with various different meanings. The most obvious sense is that of Tarsis, a city in Spain, a Phœnician colony, the chief object of the commerce of Tyre, from which the Phœnicians brought to Palestine lead, iron, brass, silver, and gold. But in some passages of the Bible, it meant certainly "maritime countries" in general, not only on the Mediterranean, but also on the Red Sea, in Arabia, and India even, if ever any allusion to it is made in Scripture, which seems doubtful.

That it does not mean here Tarsis or Tartessus in Spain seems very probable from this circumstance, that the word Tubal, which follows shortly after, and is translated in the Vulgate by "Italy," means rather "Spain," as St. Jerome admits himself. But in such

a short enumeration as this of Isaias, it does not seem likely that Spain would be mentioned twice.

In such a state of the case, if the interpretation of Father Foreiro is not admitted, on the plea that nothing but conjecture can find it in the words of the prophet, then Tarsis must mean a country, situated on a sea different from the Mediterranean, namely, around Arabia or even India, with which Arabia always traded. No more precise meaning can be given to the word of the text now under consideration.

Then come the next expressions of the prophet, which are "Pul" and "Lud." The first seems to create a useless difficulty for modern Protestant expositors. Bochard in *Phaleg*\* understands by it *Philæ*, which has no analogy to it, as in the Egyptian language it is Pilak; the lexicographers merely say it means "a people in Africa;" if it meant "a people" it would most probably have the plural termination; it must mean "a country in Africa." The tenth chapter of Genesis mentions Phuth directly after Mesraim among the sons of Ham; here the question arises, Has Phuth any analogy with Pul or Phul, for thus it must be pronounced? St. Jerome seems to us to solve the question in his *Commentaries* on Genesis, when he says that even in his time the whole of North Africa from Lybia to Mauritania was often called *regio Phutensis a fluvio Phul*. We take the quotation from Foreiro. He himself adopts this opinion. It can be, therefore, admitted as probable and practically certain that Isaias speaks, in the passage under consideration, of Northern Africa from Egypt to the Pillars of Hercules, and announces that the messengers of God would reach the whole of this country. For several centuries Christianity flourished all along that coast of the Mediterranean; and if the Saracens and Turks later on nearly destroyed it, it was certainly only for a time. The day is already dawning when Mahometanism shall disappear in those regions, and be replaced by Christianity, whatever may say those who pretend that the religion of Mahomet is on the increase everywhere. When the political power in those countries will no more rest in the hands of the Moslems, the people will be open to conversion.

With respect to *Lud*, there was certainly in Africa a people called *Ludim*, mentioned in Genesis x., to which Ezechiel makes allusion in his thirtieth chapter, and Jeremiah in his forty-sixth; but the *Lud*

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\* *Phaleg* iv. cap. 26.

alluded to in this passage as well as the Lydia spoken of by Ezechiel, chapter twenty-seventh, seems to be different. First, it is a country, not a people ; the termination shows it. Secondly, if the conjecture of F. Foreiro is right, namely, that the word *Tarshish* at the beginning of this enumeration of countries is the summary of what followed, and indicates that it comprises only "maritime regions," then the *Lud* mentioned cannot be the African, as this was a name for Ethiopia, certainly an inland country with respect to Palestine. It must be a territory bordering somewhere on the sea ; and there is no other of that description and name than Lydia in Asia Minor. Josephus, in his *Antiquities*,\* speaks of the Lydians as Semites, and consequently refers to them the word of Genesis.† Among modern authors, Bunsen, O. Müller, and Lassen incline to this opinion, although Rawlinson refuses to adopt it. Herodotus was certainly in favor of it ; and many ethnographers regard as Semites the Etruscans in Italy who were a colony from Lydia. We must not, therefore, be surprised that some of the best Catholic expositors regard the *Lud*, which now occupies us, as Lydia in Asia Minor ; and Foreiro, a host in himself, is positively of that opinion.

The word *Tubal*, translated in the Vulgate by Italy, must rather mean Spain ; and St. Jerome, although he himself composed the Vulgate, states positively in his *Commentaries* that such must be the interpretation of this word.

Finally, there is no conflict of opinion with respect to the word *Javan* ; all are agreed that it signifies Greece.

This short dissertation shows sufficiently that the opinion of Foreiro is far more probable than any other, and must be adopted, namely, that Isaias predicts in this passage the propagation of Christianity in Europe, North Africa, and Western Asia ; and that these countries were chosen by him as representative of the whole world ; because of the early rapidity with which the Christian religion was to spread throughout them. But, as if the prophet were not satisfied with this short enumeration, he adds directly in general terms : "I will send them to the islands afar off, to them that have not heard of me, and have not seen my glory," words comprehensive enough, embracing the whole Gentile world where the prophecies announcing the Messiah could be said not to have penetrated.

The following verse, "and they shall bring," etc., expresses meta-

\* Ant. i. vi. 4.

† Gen. x. 22.

phorically the suddenness of the conversion of those nations. They will become citizens of the New Jerusalem, that is, of the Christian Church, so rapidly, that it will be the same as if they were bodily conveyed to the old city of Jerusalem in the most numerous and swift modes of locomotion ; thence "litters," "mules," "coaches," "chariots," are mentioned. Of course the Talmudists imagine that it alludes to the pretended future return of the dispersed Jews to Palestine, when it is evident from the context that in speaking of those that are "conveyed," the prophet does not refer to the race of Abraham, but to the Gentiles converted to Christ by the first apostles, and henceforth the "brethren" of the Jews.

Finally, the following verses give so exact, graphic, and positive a description of the future Church, that nobody in our day, when the action of Holy Church is constantly going on before our eyes, could describe it better.

The priesthood of the new law is alluded to in a few words only, but how clear and positive : "I will take of them to be priests and levites." The words 'of them' refer to the Gentiles.

The new dispensation will not, consequently, be intrusted any more to the ministerial care of the race of Aaron. It is among the new converts that the Lord is to choose priests and levites ; and since they will belong to all races and climes, the priesthood will likewise be the privilege of all.

Thus the Aaronic ministry was to cease ; but—a most remarkable prediction—the priesthood which is to succeed it would never end : "For as, after the day of the last judgment, the new heavens and the new earth shall stand forever before me, and never again be destroyed ; so likewise the priesthood established by the Messiah is to stand and never to perish."

This is undoubtedly the plain meaning of the verse we have taken the liberty to slightly modify in a short paraphrase.

"And there"—in the new Christian Church—"shall be monthly feast after monthly feast, and sabbath after sabbath ; and all flesh shall come to adore before my face, saith the Lord."

In the new religion, therefore, there will not be, as in the old, only one temple, which people were commanded to visit three times in the year ; but the public worship of God will henceforth take place everywhere, and every month, and every week ; and the prophet might have added, every day.

The statement made above, that the sixty-sixth chapter of Isaias is

a *summary* of the whole book, is thus proved to be correct. Not only it sums up the previous chapters ; but it gives point to many passages which otherwise would remain to a certain extent vague, as they mostly seem to deal in generalities.

### 11. *A word on Daniel's prophecies.*

Were we to collect all the passages of the Old Testament of the same import, this work would swell to proportions which were never intended. The reader must be satisfied with the rather long array which has already passed in review before his eyes ; and it is proper to leave off what has been said on the subject by Jeremiah, Ezechiel, and the minor prophets. The extraordinary predictions of Daniel, however, require at least a few words, since the weighty considerations they might give rise to cannot be indulged in at length.

Modern rationalists, it is true, contest the authority of this book, and pretend that it was written under the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. They forget that the author of the first book of Maccabees speaks of Daniel, and refers to the history of Azarias, Misael, and Ananias ; a fact altogether irreconcilable with their assertion. Josephus, besides, by relating the celebrated interview between the high-priest of the Jews and Alexander the Great, when the prophecies of Daniel were, according to him, presented to the Macedonian hero as a sure pledge of his future victory over the Persian king, thus evidently testifies that his countrymen, the Israelites, had long been acquainted with the book in question, even supposing the pretended interview to have been only a fable. Catholic expositors have treated the case in full, and vindicated successfully the authorship of this work, assailed by extremely weak reasons which no sagacious critic can accept.

The universality and eternity of the future kingdom of the Messiah is conspicuously announced in the second chapter of the book of Daniel, when the young prophet explains to the king the dream of the statue, whose head was of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the lower parts of the body of brass, and the legs of iron. These represented four great empires which had succeeded, or were to succeed each other ; namely, the Assyrian, Persian, Greek and Roman. But a stone cut out of a mountain without any human help was to strike the statue's feet, break it, grow suddenly in size, become a

great mountain, and finally fill the whole earth. This last part of the dream Daniel explains in these words

“In the days of those kingdoms, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed ; and it shall not be delivered up to another people ; and it shall break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms ; and itself shall stand forever.”

What may be considered as obscure in this interpretation, in its reference to the future Church of Christ, is explained by a subsequent vision of the prophet, under the image of four beasts, which evidently represent also the previous four empires. But instead of the stone by which the statue was broken in pieces, the conclusion of the dream is presented in the following words :

“I beheld in the vision of the night, and lo, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and he came even to the Ancient of days ; and they presented him before Him.

“And He gave him power, glory, and a kingdom ; and all peoples, tribes, and tongues shall serve him ; his power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away ; and his kingdom, that shall not be destroyed.”

We need not refer to the last vision of Daniel, when Gabriel appeared to him, and predicted so clearly the time appointed for the fulfillment of these prophecies. It is certainly impossible to imagine words more forcible, and statements more positive. Not to be convinced requires absolute disbelief ; since all the elements of truth are contained therein. The attempts made from the beginning by the enemies of the Christian religion to deride those venerable predictions—attempts renewed often since—have been as often defeated ; and the Christian can present again with confidence to an unbelieving world the proofs, clear as day, that God has truly spoken.

But for many these prophecies are mere dreams of vain longings, natural to the human heart in times of calamity, and under the weight of deep sorrow. Hope then comes to delude us by bright anticipations, and the vague words of enthusiasts are taken up and repeated with more emphasis and point, until a well-arranged tale is the consequence. Thus they speak.

To indulge in these suppositions, men must imagine that a supernatural religion is a dream ; yet religion can scarcely be conceived unless it be supernatural—they must maintain that every revelation is a myth ; yet the history of man cannot positively be understood without the knowledge of what revelation tells us they have to be-

lieve ; that God has never spoken to man either of the past or of the future ; yet without that divine voice, man would be a perfect mystery to himself—they must come so far down as to say that our Holy Scriptures are a tissue of fables ; yet Holy Writ alone explains rationally our origin, and unfolds naturally our end—they have finally to reach the height of folly by boldly pretending that this world is not a work of design ; yet everything calls upon us to acknowledge and adore the Great Designer. They call themselves lovers of light and knowledge, and the Christians children of darkness and ignorance, whilst in fact the path of the true Christian is strewed with light and truth ; and their own is buried in an impenetrable obscurity.

But they add triumphantly that the Jews, for whom chiefly these prophetic declarations were uttered, did not admit their fulfillment, remained deaf to their voice, and thus openly declared their obscurity and want of authority. We reply that if this is true of the majority of the children of Abraham, their obstinacy had been foretold, and was an essential part of these predictions ; that, in fact, a great number of Jews confessed the truth at its fulfillment ; eight thousand were converted in a couple of days by the mere assertion of Peter referring to this very accomplishment of the prophecies in the person of Christ. During several years most Christian converts were Jews, and the apostles scarcely ever chose any other place for preaching except the Jewish synagogues on Saturdays. Thus at the time when it was most easy to compare and acquire conviction, the comparison was made, and the conviction secured for a great multitude.

The blindness of the unbelieving Israelites is very satisfactorily explained by the obstinacy so characteristic of the nation, by self-interest which bound them to the Mosaic law, by the well-known aversion of many of them for all other races, which even the Christian Jews hesitated to receive into the new Church as polluted and unworthy of the acceptance of God, by a multitude of circumstances which we are forbidden by our limits to unfold, but which every intelligent man of our times must now know perfectly.

A last proof, however, of the truly divine character of those prophetic utterances is the constant reference made to them by Christ himself and his apostles. This will be the subject of the following short chapter.

## CHAPTER III.

## A FEW WORDS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ON THE SAME SUBJECT—CHARACTER OF THE APOSTLES' MISSION AND ENTERPRISE.

1. *Character of Christ, and his allusions to previous prophecies.*

THE prophecies of the Old Testament, particularly their frequent references to the supernatural and sacred character of a future universal Church, do not derive their force only from the high mission of the seers by whom they were uttered, nor from their evident truthful import ; but the numerous allusions made to them in the books of the New Testament would suffice to show at once their divine origin, and their real scope and significance. It is impossible to consider them as vague forebodings of earthly blessings, when the Divine Master and his apostles apply them with such power to the actual circumstances of their lives and work. Those exegetists, therefore, who so earnestly endeavor to reduce them to the exterior display of a mere natural enthusiasm, deprived altogether of divine guidance and inspiration, are bound to apply the same rule to the exalted office of the Son of God himself. Nay, what is worse, they speak of him with an apparent respect, often with an assumed tone of piety, even occasionally with an almost fulsome praise, when in fact their object is to brand his mission with the character of falsehood and imposture. For to this it must come. But in spite of their efforts to deprive mankind of faith, the words of the Saviour carry with them a majesty and an unquestionable air of truthfulness, which all sincere men must bow to, and which cannot but bring conviction wherever there is simply good faith.

One of those utterances from the lips of Christ, which alone would suffice to prove the connection of the two covenants, and the true meaning of the old prophets, is contained in the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Luke, verse 46. It was addressed to the apostles in one of the apparitions of the Saviour after his resurrection : “ These are the words which I spake to you when I was yet with you, that

all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, *concerning me.*"

It is the voice of the Master that is heard, the voice that had said to the Jews a few days previous, "before Abraham was made, I am."\* He had himself inspired Moses and the prophets and David ; he knew consequently their meaning when they spoke. For the Christian, after these few words of our Lord, there is no need of exegetists, with their discussions of Hebrew text; and Septuagint version. Prophecy is interpreted by the life and institutions of the Saviour ; we have only to compare both, and we are sure of the meaning of the first by the recital of the second.

It is proper to look awhile at this majestic, and at the same time most attractive Personality, embodied in our flesh although evidently heavenly and divine, who once trod this earth, and spoke words of life, which unfortunately too many sophists obscure by their commentaries, when only one oracle has been left by him to explain what might be doubtful—his Church. We can say but a few words on the subject ; but they must be said to show the importance of the utterances of Christ on the matter we are inquiring into.

The first prodigies which accompanied his human birth had long been forgotten, even by the few, perhaps, who heard of them. He had lived in obscurity thirty years to teach uncomplaining resignation to men, whose greatest number are doomed to a life of humility and toil. But a great voice is heard on the banks of the Jordan ; all Judea is moved, and crowds rush at the announcement of it, to receive a merely typical baptism. It is the cry predicted long before by the prophet : †

"The voice of one crying in the desert : prepare ye the way of the Lord ; make straight in the wilderness the paths of our God."

Jesus knows the time has come for him to appear before the world ; and his first act is to hide himself unperceived among the multitude of sinners. But John has received a commission from Heaven : to point him out to those who are not aware of his presence. "As people were of opinion that John might be the Christ, he answered to them all, saying : I indeed baptize you with water, but there shall come one mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost

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\* John viii. 58.

† Isaías xl. 8.

and with fire." \* And directly after : "when all the people were baptized, Jesus also being baptized and praying, heaven was opened. And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, as a dove, upon him ; and a voice came from heaven : Thou art my beloved son, in thee I am well pleased." God himself said later on Mount Tabor : "This is my beloved son, hear ye him."

What an exuberant and fruitful life was crowded in the three years that followed ! And yet, what a wonderful simplicity, and, in appearance, commonplace demeanor ! On foot, accompanied by twelve humble men like himself, he travels through the country, sometimes dwelling in large cities, sometimes resting in solitude ; what has he come to do ? He speaks plainly on the subject : John the Baptist had announced that "the kingdom of heaven was at hand," he says that truly "it has come."

He can say so, for he has left heaven, † and brought it on earth. He declares that the kingdom of heaven on earth is the reign of virtue, and he comes to preach it. He can read in the hearts of men, and he knows they are full of foul thoughts and desires. † He comes to purify them ; for as the sick need a physician, so the sinners need his own care. What an overflow of unbounded pity gushes forth from that divine heart, at the sight of so many moral bruises, and wounds, and ruins, and woes ! Even the physical sufferings of mankind awake his tender and universal sympathy. The pages of the Gospel are full of moving narratives of this kind ; and in the Book of Acts, St. Luke sums up the whole by saying that "he went on doing good." No one but an incarnate God could show such love for man, and prove it so abundantly and so unaffectedly. As the author of *The Christ of History* justly says : § "The character of the miracles of Jesus must not be overlooked. . . . They were not mere signs of power, but lessons of wisdom, and acts of mercy ; they were not simply attestations of a Divine Presence, but subduing expressions and expositions of the Divine character. The bountiful and loving God, in the form of man, came to bless the world ; the Incarnate One—then how truly godlike—is seen giving bread to the poor, sight to the blind, health to the diseased, life to the dead ! And how significant, how eloquent, were these material types of his higher spiritual powers and gifts ! . . . He came

\* Luke, iii. 15, 16.

† Matt. xxiii. 28. Marc. vii. 21.

‡ John, iii. 12.

§ Page 256.

to supply spiritual wants as he had supplied natural wants ; to provide a remedy for spiritual evils as he had cured physical evils ; he came to abolish death, to put away sin, and to reveal and bestow eternal life." Truly, we may exclaim, the work of a God ! Thus for us, the prodigies he performed not only prove his mission, as he said himself with simplicity ; they prove he was God sent by God ; and his apostles, to whom he left the task of finding it out, declared through the mouth of Peter, " Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." \*

They wrote their conviction of it in the Gospels they left after them, and John described the eternal generation of the Word, " by whom all things were made ;" ending with the declaration that " the Word was made flesh, and dwelt with us." And he added a little later on, " our hands have touched the Word of life."

Hence we cannot be surprised that in all the manifested thoughts, words, and actions of our Lord, no one has ever been able to detect not only the least moral stain, but even the shadow of an imperfection or error. The author just quoted has well said it ; we could not improve on his statement of the case : † " We behold Jesus in every conceivable variety of positions, mingling with all sorts of persons, and with all kinds of events ; we follow the steps of his public life, and we watch his most unsuspecting and retired moments ; we see him in the midst of thousands, or with his disciples, or with a single individual ; we see him in the capital of his country, or in one of its remote villages, in the Temple and the Synagogue, or in the desert, or in the streets ; we see him with the rich and with the poor, the prosperous and the afflicted, the good and the bad, with his private friends and with his enemies and murderers ; and we behold him at last in circumstances the most overwhelming which it is possible to conceive, deserted, betrayed, falsely accused, unrighteously condemned, nailed to a cross. But wherever he is, and however placed, in the ordinary circumstances of his daily life, or at the last supper, or in Gethsemane, or in the judgment hall, or on Calvary, he is the same meek, pure, wise, God-like being."

Meanwhile the most adverse circumstances never move him from the only—the single object of his life : to establish the reign of virtue, by first destroying sin. Sin is the great, the only real evil ; virtue the great, the only real good. This is salvation ; and Christ de-

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\* Matt. xvi. 16.

† Page 223.

clares that "all men are called to salvation." But having such a pure, disinterested object in view, he finds opposition everywhere; evidently man does not wish to be saved, delights in sin, and remains at best indifferent to virtue. The Saviour never expresses his surprise at such a thing; he evidently knew it beforehand, expected it, and undertook to fulfill his mission with the sure prospect of ungratefulness, opposition, and refusal on the part of those he came to save. Can we conceive a man, a mere man, placing himself in such a situation, and remaining in it steadfastly after perceiving it? Yet such a thankless task our Lord undertook, and he never wavered in his first determination.

More than this, he appeared at last to have failed completely, and yet proclaimed to the end that he would triumph! This consideration requires a few words.

On the last day of his human life, not only his usual enemies—the Pharisees, Scribes, and priests; but the people who had so long admired him and listened to him with delight, turned against him, and called for his blood. His very disciples and the dearest of his apostles fled from him; one of them had betrayed him. Nothing appeared to remain of all his labors. Yet he was not dismayed; and although, in apparent despair, he cried out to his Father, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" he was in fact sure of his future success, was only careful to see that all prophecies should be fulfilled in his person; and when he perceived that nothing remained for him to do with respect to their consummation, he finally exclaimed: "All is accomplished," and expired. Those feelings of confidence and certainty which he had so well expressed the day previous in his last conversation with his apostles, remained to the last firm and unshaken. He had said: "In the world ye shall have distress, but have confidence; I have overcome the world."\* "You now indeed have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you."† "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more. But you see me; because I live, and you shall live. In that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."‡ He had, a few days previously, expressed it yet much more forcibly, when he said: "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself,"§ and the evangelist remarks on this text: "This he said, signifying what death he should die."

\* John, xvi. 33.

† Ib. ver. 22.

‡ Ib. xiv. 19, 20.

§ Ib. xii. 32.

He had, therefore, himself announced that his complete success would be the consequence of his passion, that is, of his apparent failure. Isaias had said that by giving his life for sinners he would leave after him an everlasting posterity ; Christ repeated the same truth in other words more expressive still and more pointed with respect to the future : “If I be crucified, I will draw all things to myself, and spread the kingdom of heaven all over the earth.” No nobler allusion to the future universal Church could be made by the lips of God himself. *Omnia traham ad me ipsum.* That opposition which he met during his human life would no more exist, at least for a great number, as soon as he should have been “lifted up from the earth,” then he would draw everything to himself, *omnia* ; it is no more a question of the Jewish people alone ; all nations were to come after him, to be drawn behind his car bound in fetters of love. The prophet had placed, long before, on his lips, the well-known words addressed to his Father : “Thou hast given me the nations as an inheritance,” the time had come for the accomplishment of the oracle. Love would draw “the nations” after him ; a love which had never been known before on earth : the devoted affection of millions of human beings, ready at all times to die for “the Crucified.” Directly after his ascension men of all races would hasten to enroll themselves under his standard, and his Church would become at once Catholic. We will soon have to describe the rush of Asiatics, Africans, and Europeans alike ; Christians know it sufficiently ; they know too that of all his true disciples there was not one who would not gladly have given his life in proof of his belief and love. How many millions were put to the test of blood, from that first moment to this hour ! The annals of nearly all nations, at the time of their conversion, have preserved the names of some of these heroes of the faith. Even at the moment we write the Far Orient witnesses almost daily the same astonishing spectacle ; the Anamite, the Chinese, the Corean Churches inscribe now in their “martyrologies” the names of those who shed willingly their blood for the Saviour they only begin to know. Bishops, priests, people, and among these not alone men, but tender women and little children, all show the same eagerness to “be drawn” after their crucified Lord in the same bonds of martyrdom.

And the multitude of those who are not called to “die the death” show their love for Christ in a manner as heroic, although more protracted and slow. They subdue their passions, and try, all their

lives long, to imitate the character of their Redeemer in their daily actions. This was more remarkable at the beginning. How could the effeminate Roman, and the sensuous Greek become so soon and so thoroughly steadfast in virtue, and ardent for holiness? The answer is plain and soon told: they loved Christ; and this deep feeling sustained them in their moral daily fight against evil inclinations. Augustine is a great example of it; but how many millions more are known to God, and have never been known to men? The reformation of morals wherever Christianity penetrated is a striking feature of which we may speak later on; we merely allude to it in this place; and this reformation was effected by the ardent desire of all converts to imitate the Saviour who "drew them after him."

Mr. Lecky himself understood it, and expressed the same thought in terms of admiration which we are glad to reproduce. "It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character"—that of Christ—"which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists. This has indeed been the well-spring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life. Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priesthood and persecution and fanaticism that have defaced the Church, it has preserved, in the character and example of its Founder, an enduring principle of regeneration. Perfect love knows no rights. It creates a boundless, uncalculating self-abnegation that transforms the character, and is the parent of every virtue. . . . There have ever existed in Christianity those who would echo the wish of St. Teresa, that she could blot out both heaven and hell, to serve God for himself alone; and the power of the love of Christ has been displayed alike in the most heroic pages of Christian martyrdom, in the most pathetic pages of Christian resignation, in the tenderest pages of Christian charity," etc.\*

Pity that Mr. Lecky has not always kept on his desk a copy of this eloquent paragraph. He would not subsequently have insisted so

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\* History of European Morals, vol. ii., pages 9, 10.

long, and so persistently, on "the sins and failings," on "the priesthood and persecution and fanaticism that have defaced the Church," so as to make people believe the contrary of what he justly asserts here, that "the Church has preserved, in the character and example of its Founder, an enduring principle of *regeneration*."

Let us come back to the direct words of the Saviour illustrative of our present main object of research ; and first we quote again the passage of St. Luke, from which we began : "all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me."\* The character of our Lord, such as it has just been described, must therefore be found in the prophecies of the Old Testament ; and not only his personal character, but likewise the effect of his doctrine on his countrymen, and on the whole of mankind. This, as was said, is a sure rule of hermeneutics whenever the meaning of the old prophecies concerning Christ and his Church is the subject of investigation. The law of Moses, on account of the numerous types and figures which it contains, the prophets when speaking directly of the great objects that have been just mentioned, and the Psalms of David likewise in their inspired strains of oracular poetry about a distant future and the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah, find in what is known from the Gospels and from a sure tradition, a clear illustration of their meaning when that meaning is in the least doubtful or gives rise to the least ambiguity.

But our Lord was not satisfied with a reference to the great men who had spoken of him long ages before ; he spoke himself on the very same subject, and we must surely place the Incarnate Son of God far above all other prophets and seers. What did he say of the dissemination all over the earth of the religion he came to preach ? When he spoke the divine words we are going to hear, he appeared unwilling to prepare by his own efforts that glorious future. Not only he never went himself to urge the Gentiles to come to him ; but he forbade his apostles to do so during his life, "*in viam Gentium ne abieritis.*"† He said of himself that he was sent only "to the sheep that were lost of the house of Israel ;"‡ and on this account he first refused to listen to the prayer of a woman of Canaan who did not belong to the Jewish race. St. Paul gives us the reason of it in his Epistle to the Romans.§ "Christ Jesus was minister of the cir-

\* Luke, xxiv. 44.

† Matt. x. 5.

‡ Matt. xv. 24.

§ Rom. xv. 8.

cumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers." On this passage Calmet says justly: "Our Saviour is called the minister of circumcision, that is, of the Jews, because he appeared among them, dwelt among them, and himself preached among them. This was a privilege which the Gentiles did not enjoy, having never seen nor heard Jesus Christ, since he confined his preaching to the strayed sheep of the house of Israel; and this, *to accomplish the promises made to the fathers*," namely, the pledges often repeated in the old law, that the Messiah born of the Jewish race, should be sent first to the Jews as their special deliverer and teacher, to offer to them first the boon of salvation, and have them afterward as his co-operators in the conversion of the Gentiles, if they chose to listen to him.

But to show that redemption would be offered to all, and not to the Hebrews only; at the same time that he is so careful not to enter any Gentile territory, scarcely appearing once *in finibus Tyri*—on the borders of Phœnicia—and to absolutely forbid his apostles, during his life, to set their foot on Gentile and Samaritan ground; he speaks meanwhile, and proves by his words that the prohibition is but temporary, and the time will come when the message of the Gospel shall be carried to the utmost bounds of the earth. And first, knowing how the Jews were sensitive with regard to their privilege of being called exclusively the people of God, he employs parables and allegories, clear enough for all at this time, but not so obvious to the Jews.

The most remarkable of them in our opinion is the parable of the prodigal son,\* which evidently depicts, under the figure of two young men, the personality of the Hebrew people on the one side, and on the other that of the whole Gentile world. The elder born—the Jews—has always dwelt in the house of the father common to both, always practiced the true religion, and adored the Supreme God; the younger son—the Gentiles—formerly, before idolatry began, had enjoyed the same privilege and worshiped the same Infinite Lord and Master; but in the succession of ages, this younger son, having willfully deprived himself of that inestimable boon, and left the house of God, to worship idols, he had become a wanderer and a debauchee. Every one who has read the Gospel, even cursorily, knows how God himself is represented opening wide his arms to receive again the prodigal to his bosom, and gives him such extraordinary marks of

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\* Luke, xv.

love and tender affection, that the "elder born" grows jealous, and complains bitterly of being left in the background when the spend-thrift receives openly the first honors of the house.

The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. Paul describe vividly these feelings of envy in the hearts of the Jewish converts when they saw the Syrians, the Phoenicians, the Greeks adopted into the sonship of God, and placed on the same footing with themselves. Many Israelites, we have no doubt, refused, at the time, to enter the Church, for no better reason than this facility granted to strangers, and the equality of all, before God, in the new sanctuary.

The parable of the "laborers in the vineyard" contained in the twentieth chapter of St. Matthew, offers us the same view of the future as displayed by our Lord, and the same unjust complaints of the Jews. But the last words of it are remarkable, and deserve a few moments of attention. "So shall the last be first, and the first last," says the Saviour in conclusion. These words, followed immediately by the phrase: "for many are called, but few chosen," refer certainly to the future life, and give rise to the commentaries of Catholic exegetists who understand the previous sentence of the reward granted to the elect in the next world. But there is no doubt that many texts of Scripture contain at the same time various meanings all equally allowable and pointedly intended by the source of all inspiration, the Holy Spirit; and to make this last passage of the parable agree fully with what precedes it, the order of the call being the chief feature of it, "the first" can very well be understood of the Hebrews, and "the last" of the Gentiles. In this supposition, our Lord foretells that in the new dispensation, not only members of the Jewish race should have no superiority over the rest of mankind, but that the case should be altogether reversed, and not only all men would be equally admitted in the new city, but the guidance of it would be confided to men of other race than the Israelites. This at least seems to be a natural meaning perfectly consonant with the whole passage. The same can be said of the parable of the king's son's marriage,\* and a simple glance at it in the Gospel will be sufficient to convince the reader.

Thus a number of parables are presented to his hearers by our Lord, all intimating that the knowledge of God and the practice of the true religion would soon be granted to other people than the

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\* Matt. xxii. 1, et seq.

Jewish ; and as no discrimination is made among them, as on the contrary the expressions in those allegories are general and embrace all people foreign to the Hebrew race, the conclusion is that the Saviour announced that the true Church he came to found would be universal, and his messengers would gather them in from all nations though buried at the time in idolatry ; so that the same true worship of the common Father of all would spread itself wherever mankind is found on earth.

This is expressed still more pointedly in the words of our Lord, addressed to the Samaritan woman at the well of Sichar : “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when you shall neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, adore the Father. You adore that which you know not ; we adore that which we know, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth.” In these few words the Saviour says expressly that the true worship of God should not any more be confined to the Temple of Jerusalem, the only place then where sacrifices pleasing to God were offered, for “salvation was of the Jews.” The pretensions of the Samaritans with respect to their Temple were groundless, and he could not approve of them. But both temples were shortly to be destroyed, and the true worshipers of God would be found everywhere ; for everywhere on earth men would adore God in spirit and in truth. That such was surely the intention of our Lord when he thus spoke, is evident from this, that he mentions no particular place to be assigned instead of Jerusalem or Garizim. No spot is pointed out for a new Temple, because in all countries the true sacrifice would be offered, and let it be so in special edifices scattered all over the globe, or under the sky in forests, on mountains, or even in caves, it would be pleasing to God, because presented to him “in spirit and in truth.” The text of Malachi\* comes here naturally to the mind : “From the rising of the sun, even to its going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation ; for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts.”

If necessary, this meaning of our Lord could be further proved by what he stated on other occasions, in reference to the spread of his religion in a near future. In St. Matthew,† the kingdom of heaven

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\* Malachi, i. 11.

† Matt. xiii. 31, et seq.

—future Christianity—is compared to “a grain of mustard-seed which a man took and sowed in his field. Which indeed is the least of all seeds ; but when it is grown up it is greater than any herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof.” It is also compared\* “to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened.” And further on † “to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together all kinds of fish.”

Although in these various texts no express mention is made of the complete universality of the process as a type of the future Catholicity of the Church, yet the effect of the whole on the mind goes evidently in that direction ; and the Saviour is clearly understood to predict that “his kingdom” would protect under its shade all the birds of the air—all men—or leaven with its spirit the whole measure of meal, representing the world ; or include as within a net fish of every kind, that is, men of all races.

But a positive allusion to the conversion of the heathen is likewise contained in several passages of the New Testament which we must not pass over without, at least, some reflections.

Our Lord did not during his life make any attempt at bringing to his fold the numerous Gentile races living at the time near or even among the Jews ; and the reason of it has been stated from St. Paul. He even first refused to heal the daughter of the Syro-Phœnician woman because she did not belong to the race of Israel. The ardent faith of the mother, however, moved the heart of Jesus to pity. A miracle of exactly the same kind mentioned in St. Matthew,‡ became the occasion of the Saviour uttering some very remarkable words.

A Roman centurion, a pagan, having a servant “sick of the palsy, and grievously tormented,” applied to the Saviour in his behalf. Jesus did not treat first the centurion harshly as he had done the woman of Phœnicia, and he promised to go directly. The story needs not be recounted in full. The worthy soldier interposed and begged of the Lord not to go but merely “to say a word” and his servant would be healed. “For,” he said, “I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth ; and to another, Come, and he cometh ; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.” So our Lord, master of life and of death, had only to command sickness to depart, and health would come. Then

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\* Ver. 38.

† Ver. 47.

‡ Matt. viii.

Jesus, hearing this, wondered, and said to those that followed him : “Amen I say to you, I have not found so great a faith in Israel. And I say unto you that many shall come from the east, and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into exterior darkness.” The numerous oracles of Isaias on the subject of the conversion of the nations, and the reprobation of the Jews, could not be expressed more forcibly than by such words as these. The same thought is yet brought forth with more energy by St. Luke : \* “You shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And there shall come people from the east, and the west, and the north, and the south, and they shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And behold they are last who shall be first, and they are first who shall be last.”

All these great future events were announced by Jesus Christ in a simple, clear, unfigurative language ; as became the Master of all things, speaking a few years, or even months, before their accomplishment. The prophets had used typical and metaphorical expressions, to impress the same truths more deeply in the minds of their hearers. The events were in their time far distant. Announced in simple style, people would have soon forgotten them ; the glow of poetry was required to draw the attention of Orientals to things yet far removed in the future. But our Lord spoke for all, for the positive and matter-of-fact Europeans, as well as for the more imaginative Asiatics ; and as the events were to be realized in so short a time there was no fear any one should forget it.

It was precisely this fact—that the time was near—which emboldened Jesus to speak openly ; and this is clearly seen in the Gospel of St. John.† It is impossible to produce a stronger proof of the vocation of all Gentiles without exception. The passage must be studied thoroughly. We quote first the words of the Evangelist :

“There were certain Gentiles that came up [to Jerusalem] to adore on the festival day.

“These, therefore, came to Philip who was of Bethsaida, of Galilee, and desired him saying : Sir, we would willingly see Jesus.

“Philip cometh, and telleth Andrew ; again Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

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\* Luke, xiii. 28, et seq.

† John, xii. 20, et seq.

“ But Jesus answered them saying : The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.

“ Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat fall into the ground and die,

“ Itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life, shall lose it ; and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life everlasting.

“ If any man minister to me, let him follow me ; and where I am, there also shall my minister be. If any man minister to me, him will my Father honor.

“ Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause I came unto this hour.

“ Father, glorify thy name. A voice, therefore, came from heaven : I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again.

“ The multitude that stood and heard, said that it thundered. Others said : An angel spoke to him.

“ Jesus answered, and said : This voice came not for me, but for your sake.

“ Now is the judgment of the world ; now shall the Prince of this world be cast out.

“ And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself.”

It was a few days only before the passion of Christ that this happened. The Saviour knew that his enemies were conspiring against him. Almost every day he reproved them with energy, and on one occasion he plainly told them, “you want to kill me.” He saw the nation at the moment of exclaiming : “ *Tolle, tolle, crucifige eum.* ” By becoming deicides, they were to lose the privilege of being called exclusively “the people of God.” But he saw another following ready to come from all parts of the earth as soon as he would be “lifted up” on the cross. It is at this solemn instant that Andrew and Philip came to announce that some Gentiles wished to see him.

It was common for foreigners to come to adore in the Temple of Jerusalem ; there was a large inclosure reserved for them. Emperors and kings from the Gentile world used to send their offerings to this renowned sanctuary. Persian potentates, Syrian monarchs, even Roman Caesars considered it an honor to have sacrifices offered in their name. A few weeks later on, a eunuch of the queen of Ethiopia was to come also and offer presents in the Temple ; probably at this very moment he was in Jerusalem, or certainly on his way to it.

Jesus does not refuse any more to converse with Gentiles ; he is going to send them his apostles, and he already considers them as "his inheritance." Nay, he already looks on them as a source of glory, not only for his Eternal Father, but for himself also. His Passion, so near, begins to occupy, almost exclusively, his human thoughts ; and at the sight of the inconceivable humiliations that are in store for him, he voluntarily allows his soul to be troubled, in anticipation of Gethsemane. But the innumerable "posterity"—in the language of Isaias—promised him in case "he lays down his life for sinners," the swarm of followers who are to come from the four quarters of the world, all now pagans, but to be converted to the true God, and to be received in the bosom of his Church, bring to his soul that unutterable consolation derived from the idea of the salvation of men, and from the substitution of the reign of justice and truth to that of crime and error.

All these thoughts are clearly indicated in the verses of the Gospel of St. John, quoted above. As soon as Jesus hears from Andrew and Philip that some Gentiles wish to speak with him, he exclaims : "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." Cornelius a Lapide thus comments on this single line, and he puts on the Saviour's lips the following words : "Do not drive away those Gentiles, but bring them to me. What I told you formerly, 'not to go after them,' was proper at the beginning of my public mission. I had then to give myself entirely to the care of the Jews ; but at this moment, when my preaching and my life are going to end together, since the Hebrews refuse to hear me, I will send you to the Gentiles. The hour has come that, through my death, and after my resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Holy Ghost, I should be glorified, not only by the children of Israel, but by people of all nations and races ; so that through your preaching, O ye my friends and apostles, all should acknowledge, worship, and adore me as the Messiah and Saviour."

But the beloved disciple goes much further. He testifies to the following words of the Saviour : "Unless the grain of wheat fall into the ground and die," etc., which can naturally be thus commented upon : "All this glorious termination of my labors and yours must follow my death ; and others will give their life also after me—how many among the Gentiles ! If any man wishes thus to minister to me, let him follow me, to whatever nation and race he may belong ; and those faithful martyrs of mine my Father shall honor."

At the thought, however, of his and their Passion, the trouble of which we spoke is manifested, and the voice from heaven is heard, when Jesus closes his discourse by these last words: "Now is the judgment of the world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." Namely: the reign of Satan and of idolatry is over; and, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself."

## 2. *Character of the Apostles' Mission and Enterprise.*

The numerous texts of the New Testament illustrating the character of our Lord, and foreshadowing the great object of his mission, and the universality of the society he came to found, are convincing proofs that his undertaking was eminently supernatural. If it embraced a human aim, and was intended to benefit mankind on earth, it was, above all, planned in heaven, and intended principally to satisfy the eternal and heavenly aspirations of our superior nature. It belonged to the order of grace, and was, in fact, the outpouring of the infinite mercy of God through his Son. The reader must have remarked that all the words of our Saviour show this pre-eminently. All those divine thoughts carry us at once far above the earth, and make us acquainted with our heavenly country. The society which is announced is the reunion of earth with heaven, after they had been so long separated by sin and error. And, moreover, if the object had in view is thus of a supernatural character, the means taken to carry it out are not less so. These means are all included on the part of God in his infinite love, which induced him to send his Son, and in the self-sacrifice of the Incarnate Word, who, by being lifted up on the cross was to draw all things to himself. On the part of man the means taken for his redemption are not less supernatural, being all comprised in the remission of his sins and the sanctification of his soul by an interior grace productive of good works.

Particularly where the texts of the New Testament are taken conjointly with the prophecies of the Old, the whole appears at once as a divine plan, fore-ordained from the very beginning, kept in view all through the ages, and in which the part of man consists almost simply in receiving from heaven a gift far above those of creation, granted him without stint, and for which he brought, and could bring, no merits of his own. How so many men in our age can speak of Christianity as of an earthly institution, brought about by

natural means, and supporting itself by human policy, or priestcraft, as they say, is altogether above our comprehension. It is evident that they do not understand it. They have never reflected on the texts given out a moment ago. Perhaps they have scarcely ever read them, and taken the pains to ascertain their meaning. Yet, if any one can give us an exact idea of our holy religion, it is undoubtedly its divine Founder. From his lips alone can we know what he meant when he came to preach it, and on what ground he placed its deep foundations.

What deceives them, perhaps, is that they confine their view of it altogether to its human side, and come at last to the conclusion that there is no other. For God is not the only factor in it, and man has to do his share in his own redemption. He has to give his consent to the divine boon, and receive it thankfully. He has to co-operate with grace, and give to whatever God bestows on him its particular shape in his own person. For the same virtue, though always coming from the great source of all that is good, does not therefore appear to be the same in all individuals ; and even with a certain degree of sophism you can find in the heroism of a saint matter of accusation against his morality. Now, for the realization of the vast plan sketched very imperfectly in these pages, God needed an immense number of agents ; not only seers and prophets, and miracle-workers, but also men and women of every degree of virtue—and perhaps of no virtue at all, as some Father of the Church, whose name escapes us at this moment, has expressed it of some of the women mentioned in the genealogy of our Lord.

Such being the case, it is very easy for frail human nature—so prone to look at evil, and close its eyes to the directing Power who manages evil for his own good ends—it is very easy for the great majority of men to see in the most holy things on earth a combination of pure worldly schemes, arranged skillfully for the deception of mankind. But nothing of this can be said of the vast plan unfolded at this moment under our eyes. The part of God in the establishment of Christianity is so predominant over that of man, that whoever is sincere in looking at it must dismiss as unworthy his attention the blemishes introduced necessarily in the perfect works of God, by the infirmity of human nature when it is called to co-operate with them. In the moral world this is altogether necessary ; and those who have tried to explain the mystery of evil on earth, absolutely, have always failed. Those only who say with St. Paul, that God knows how to

draw good out of evil, can reach satisfactorily the solution of the problem. But, in fact, the part of evil in the scheme we consider is so inconsiderable, and is so evidently unconnected with it, and introduced in it by puny human agents, that the whole must be called supernatural, superhuman, divine. This results absolutely from the numerous passages of Holy Writ that have come under review, but particularly and strikingly from the words of our Lord that have been quoted and briefly commented upon.

But perhaps the weak point of the whole matter will come out as soon as the apostles appear on the stage of action, which must be at this precise moment. In them, at least, an intelligent man must see only human agents; and since they were really the founders of Christianity, which Christ gave them in charge after he had disappeared from among men, how can it be proved that their work was supernatural? It is proper, before directly treating this question, to examine a moment under what point of view the apostles are looked at, either by the rationalists, who do not admit anything in the world beyond what is earthly and human, or by many non-Catholic Christian writers, who apparently remain persuaded that our religion is a divine work, yet when they come to consider its direct and immediate agents, namely, the apostles and their successors, the rulers of the Church, seem to coincide almost exactly with the rationalists, and in their narrative of the beginnings of Christianity accept only a few insignificant and purely human facts. By both these classes of writers the apostles of Christ are represented in the same light of weak and feeble mortals, whose action can scarcely be said to have amounted to anything, and without whom Christianity would have most probably been established as naturally and simply as it was by them. That there is no exaggeration in this simple statement of the opinion of those writers will soon be proved beyond question. There is, however, for some of these authors, an exception in the person of St. Paul; and yet the individual of that name of whom they speak, is far from being the St. Paul of the Catholic Church, although both his epistles and the Acts of the Apostles are frequently quoted by them.

It is needless to point out the absolute nullity of the apostles' character in the rationalistic point of view. Of humble extraction, of no education whatever, possessing scarcely any remarkable quality of mind, all they did must not have amounted to much, since all they had to do, according to rationalists, was a human work, and

they were, humanly speaking, but poorly prepared for anything of an intellectual and moral character. Thus they did nothing, or nearly so ; and still Christianity was founded by them. This is undoubtedly an incomprehensible mystery for a man of mind. For Christianity must be admitted, even by rationalists, as one of the most important institutions that has ever appeared on earth. Its founders were, humanly speaking, perfectly incompetent for the human work they undertook, and thus it was an effect without an adequate cause. Their explanation, consequently, amounts to nothing, or rather increases the difficulty, precisely by starting from the supposition that only natural means must be admitted ; and they can find none which bear any comparison with the effect intended.

It would be profitless to discuss their theory any more : but it is important to consider somewhat more at leisure the opinion of those non-Catholic Christian writers who openly declare their conviction that Christ was God, that his religion is divine, that he established it to last forever, and yet have very little to say of the work accomplished by the apostles, and appear, in fact, to feel that they are incompetent to speak of it. Read the histories they have written, and you will be surprised to find that the first century of Christianity is almost a blank. What commission the apostles had received from Christ, and how far they carried it out, is a subject which they dare scarcely touch. The plain reason of it is, that being non-Catholics, their notion of a Church is vague ; and as it was the Church, after all, that the apostles were commissioned to found, they scarcely dare to speak in proper terms of a subject so clearly, however, set forth in the New Testament. One of the most prominent of those writers is undoubtedly Professor George P. Fisher of Yale College, who has just published a very important and interesting work, called *The Beginnings of Christianity*. One of his great objects was certainly to oppose rationalism, and he has written some splendid pages on the supernatural character of our religion. He is not a man to shrink from advocating what he knows to be true of prophecies and miracles ; he speaks of the " Plan of Jesus " as of the plan of a God, although he is far from including in it all that a Catholic would include ; he shows admirably that the plan supposed by the rationalists cannot be the true one, because " the effect is utterly disproportionate to the cause assigned ; " precisely what was stated a few paragraphs back.

Yet, with all that is excellent in the book, the reader of it is

startled when he reaches the last chapter, on “the characteristics of Christianity in the first century.” The Church looks as if it had been originally without any organization at all. This could be expected from a few passages which precede the chapter just quoted. Thus, when describing the first active ministry of the apostles in Jerusalem, because there were “diversities actually existing in the apostolic Church, and among the apostles themselves”—which is perfectly true—he says: “A satisfactory answer is, that the apostles did not arrogate to themselves the function of rulers, in any hierarchical sense, over the Christian communities which were springing up all over the Roman Empire, and especially would they avoid interference with distant Churches, with the circumstances of which they were imperfectly acquainted. . . . The apostles preferred to act as prophets rather than as bishops, and to do good by personal influence rather than by official prerogative.”\* Again, at page 509, in speaking of the “manifestations of Jesus after the resurrection,” he does not say a word of the various prerogatives that he then granted to his apostles, although he acknowledges that “these manifestations were to the disciples alone.” It is, however, well known to theologians that it was mostly during the forty days which followed his resurrection that he organized the Church; and “these manifestations were to the disciples—namely, to the apostles—alone,” because they were to be not simply *prophets*, but the real *rulers*, hierarchically, of the mystic body of Christ. At his Last Supper also the Saviour took only the twelve with him, on account of the power he wished to give to them alone of consecrating his body and blood, the essential character of the Christian priesthood—“Do this in memory of me.” It is proper to mention incidentally that the author does not speak there of this great act of our Lord, which, however, all the evangelists narrate.

After these remarkable omissions, which we do not attribute to any purpose of concealing the truth, it cannot be matter of surprise that in representing the Church as at first constituted at Jerusalem, the gifted author does not seem to admit any supernatural power in the apostolic office. The new disciples under them “still observed the regular hours prescribed by Jewish devotion for daily prayers. . . . Yet they consciously formed a brotherhood united in the closest bond.” Besides these acts of public worship in the Temple,

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\* Page 498.

"they met in their own place of assembly, or in a private house. There they joined in a common meal, which concluded with a solemn partaking of bread and wine—the whole being a commemoration of the Last Supper of the Lord with his disciples." This the author calls later on the Eucharist; yet it could not, in this anti-sacramental shape, belong to the office of the priesthood. The apostles might as well have been absent from the ceremony. Consequently, it is said at page 553, that "the early episcopacy was purely governmental. The sacerdotal conception of the ministry is not found in Ignatius, in Clement of Rome, or Clement of Alexandria, in Justin, or in Irenæus, or in any ecclesiastical writer prior to Tertullian. Bishops were the custodians of order; their functions were those of oversight and superintendence." There is no need of any further quotation. The clear result of this doctrine is that "prior to Tertullian" there was no priesthood among Christians, and the apostles were not priests. There was consequently nothing supernatural in their character or functions. No rationalist can go further in his idea of the Christian ministry.

The main reason of it has been given: A non-Catholic in this age can scarcely read the true character of the Church in the New Testament. His idea of it must always be vague and undefined; and even those who admit, like Professor Fisher, that "Christianity is a religion, not a philosophy," have to strip it of every supernatural character, and leave it bare of every godlike element.

It is time to come to the apostolic office, as described in the New Testament, and practiced by the twelve themselves. To do it briefly, the work given them to do must be plainly stated; and it will be easy afterward to understand that, in order to do it, their ministry must have had all the characters ascribed to it by Catholic theology, and supported by texts of the New Testament.

The work assigned to "the eleven" by the Saviour himself is described in a few words by St. Matthew: \* "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." The whole universe must be embraced by their ministry. It was not only the West, teeming with

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\* Matt. xviii. 18.

the Aryan races of Greece, and Italy, and Spain, and Gaul ; it was not only that small part of Asia and Africa which had been subdued by Roman arms and policy. It was the most remote regions of the East and South, where several apostles went at once, to be followed shortly by more numerous, and nearly as zealous, missionaries ; it was, in fact, the globe, unknown at the time, but which the wonders of apostolic zeal were to unveil, and reveal more powerfully yet than commerce or conquest. This was the "field" where the "laborers" were to exert all their efforts ; this was the injunction laid on the "eleven" apostles of Christ.

An illustration of it was placed under their eyes on the day of Pentecost ; and it can be read in the second chapter of the *Acts*. Still, it is not complete, since it contains only the names of the nations which the diaspora or dispersion of the Jews had reached. The apostles were enjoined to go much farther ; and the proof will be soon afforded that they did so. Asia, Africa, as well as Europe, many countries which they had never, probably, heard of before, were to be embraced in their actual grasp, and receive from them the great message they had been enjoined to carry to the utmost bounds of the earth.

And what rendered this more arduous was the fact that they were not sent only to nations ruled by the same government, imbued with the same ideas, accustomed to the same train of thoughts, and chiefly agreeing in the same form of religious worship, though false and superstitious ; but they had to present their claim to be heard to hundreds of tribes, differing entirely from each other in all these particulars. It is a great mistake to imagine that their mission was confined to the Roman Empire ; the first steps of those who started for the East, carried them at once out of the limits which encircled the power of Rome. Christian authors generally expatiate on the loving designs of Providence, which had extended that power so far, for the evident purpose of rendering possible the rapid dissemination of the Gospel. This is to a certain extent true, for this chief reason, that Europe was destined from henceforth to rule the world, and thus the subjection of Rome to Christianity helped greatly for the salvation of mankind. But, at the time, the influence of this power on the nations remaining out of it was very slight, if perceptible at all ; and consequently could help but little for the conversion of many to whom the apostles were sent. They, in fact, found themselves face to face with numerous nationalities at variance with each

other, and entirely different with respect to language, religion, customs, prejudices, and ideas.

With such a work before them, it is proper to examine what would have been their moral position in the assumption of rationalist or non-Catholic writers. They have to establish all over the world a universal Church, with only their natural faculties, without superior powers of any sort, and to extend the unity of the same faith, the same rites, and the same morality everywhere. Who are they to do this? In point of natural and acquired endowments, such as elevation of mind, extent of knowledge, fluency of speech, acquaintance with the world, they are absolutely nothing. In point of those things which generally secure personal influence, such as nobility of birth, attractiveness of manners, possession of wealth, a number of friends to start with, they are less than nothing. It must be confessed that if our Lord had intended to extend his religion all over the earth by means confined to the natural order, he had made a poor choice of those who were to do it. The very idea of it turns to be ludicrous, and consequently unworthy to be entertained for a single moment. There is nothing more to be said of it.

In fact, of all those who have endeavored to prove that the spread of Christianity was possible without the direct help of Heaven, and could actually get hold of mankind independently of it, the only one who ever appeared to meet with a momentary success, and persuaded a number of people that it was so, was the English Gibbon, last century. His celebrated "five causes" are well known. A number of Catholic writers proved directly their fallacy; and when the case is simply proposed in the terms that have been just used, there is no need of a long and intricate argument. Their refutation, however, by Dr. John Henry Newman, in his *Grammar of Assent*, must be considered by all as final, and there is nothing more to be said on this question.

There remains to investigate briefly the true causes of the success of the apostles; and they are all derived from their ministry, such as Christ had constituted it. The whole can be comprised in a short phrase: It was a supernatural office, performed by men invested with supernatural powers. The apostles knew it, and were sure beforehand that they could not fail.

The first thing to be considered is the source of their high spiritual dignity; and this was Christ, to whom they were united as apostles by the most sacred and tender bond of love. Christ contains

an infinite treasure of supernatural gifts, because, as Paul says :\* “In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead corporally.” The apostles knew that he was God. St. Peter had been the first to acknowledge it.† The exclamation of Thomas, when he saw Him after His resurrection, “My Lord and my God,” induces the belief that it was an almost usual expression of the apostles.‡ But St. John, in the first chapter of his Gospel, derives the divinity of Christ from its true source, namely, His consubstantiality with the Father.§ During three years the apostles had enjoyed His company, conversed with him, heard from him words of life, witnessed his miracles, and understood they had God with them. St. John again has expressed admirably the interior feelings of them all, when he wrote at the beginning of his first Epistle : “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.”

But if their love of the Saviour was great during his mortal career, who can understand its intensity after what they saw of and heard from him from the time of his Last Supper till his Ascension ? How many proofs of an everlasting affection did he not give them ? It is sufficient to mention his discourse to them, after celebrating the Passover of the New Law. It is reported at length by St. John, and was kept by Him for their ears only. It is in their character of apostles that they heard those wonderful expressions of the most ardent affection. This is particularly remarkable when He declares his inseparable union with them. “Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine ; you the branches,” etc.

This they must have kept constantly in their mind during their missionary labors ; and this alone would have sufficed to secure their success, by inspiring them with a superhuman courage capable of supplying all their natural shortcomings. Read their epistles ; not only those of St. Paul, but likewise those of St. Peter, St. John, and St. James, even the shortest and most insignificant, and this feeling of an unbounded confidence on the part of the apostles will be duly appreciated. He had said to them : “Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world,” | and consequently they

\* Ad Col. ii. 9.

§ John, i. 1.

† Matt. xvi. 16.

| Matt. xxviii. 20.

‡ John, xx. 28.

were sure of having with them God himself, the source of all supernatural strength and gifts.

But He had granted them prerogatives which were far above all natural endowments whatsoever. He had made them the "Teachers" of mankind : "Go, teach all nations." What did it matter that they had received no education ? They were not engaged in a worldly pursuit which requires a worldly training of some sort or other. The Eternal Word was with them, who would never leave their tongue inarticulate and speechless. They would be able to teach men, since they had been commissioned by the God-man to do so. It is manifest that since they were sent to teach all nations, all nations would listen to them. It is more manifest still that since they were appointed teachers by the God of truth, they could not possibly teach error ; and the gift of infallibility was so evidently granted to them, that the first time they wrote collectively a letter addressed to all the churches, they used the very precise expressions, "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." The teaching of the apostles, therefore, was from the beginning the firm ground of the faith of their disciples, that is, the basis of their firm conviction that it was the word of God. They were not sent, consequently, to spread their own opinions, to speak as men to other men. For this they would have felt perfectly incompetent ; far more incompetent, certainly, than many educated men living at that time among the Jews, and the Greeks, and the Romans. But what neither Jews, nor Greeks, nor Romans, outside their small organization, could have done, if they had attempted, the apostles could do, almost without an effort, because their teaching was sanctioned by Christ, by God himself. All this leaves no doubt in the mind of any reflecting man that everything is supernatural in Christianity.

Yet the prerogatives of the apostles have not been so far exhausted. The next which requires at least a moment's consideration, is the sacramental system which Christ himself had instituted, and which he left in charge to his apostles for the spiritual good of men. For he did not send them only to teach, but also to baptize ; and his baptism was not like that of John, only typical, but a real source of grace for the remission of sins. They were likewise commissioned to celebrate again and again the Last Supper of our Lord, "in commemoration of him."\* By this the Catholic Church has always

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\* Luke, xxii. 19.

taught that the apostles were made priests of the New Law by our Lord. This is not acknowledged by some men who claim the title of Christians. A word was said above on the subject. A full discussion of it is not possible here; yet it cannot be entirely passed over. That Christ was Priest as well as King cannot be denied by any Christian. The whole New Testament, confirming the promises of the Old, testifies unequivocally that he offered himself in sacrifice for the sins of mankind. The Cross was an altar. The God-man was the priest as well as the victim. His priesthood is, in fact, the only one which has ever been real in the eyes of God. That of the patriarchs, and that of the Mosaic Law were only figures of the future Priesthood of Christ; and if in the New Dispensation any man thinks he is himself a priest, it cannot be in any other sense than that he participates in the same priesthood of Christ. The sacrifice of our altars is only a renewal and repetition of that of the cross. Those who imagine that this was not the intention of our Lord at his Last Supper, must suppose that he established a new religion without a sacrifice, which could not be even thought of at the time of our Lord. Then the polytheists of every grade and hue, as well as the Jews themselves, could not think a religion was possible without altars and victims. If the Christians "until the time of Tertullian" had not believed that their bishops were invested with the sacerdotal character, as Professor Fisher of Yale seems to infer from the absence of documents, then indeed they would have inaugurated the shadowy system, so remarkable in many modern sects. Who can imagine it?

Had it been so until the time of Tertullian, how did it happen that *from* his time Christian priests are seen everywhere, and celebrate the sacrifice of the altar several times a week, if not every day? If Christianity had not at first any real priesthood, how is it that it destroyed at once all those of antiquity, if not because it replaced them by its own? The patriarchal priesthood, we know, was a divine institution established by God himself when "he spoke to the Fathers." That of Aaron was also a divine one, as the Old Testament records testify. The first had been sadly interfered with by polytheism, still its poor remnants persisted in the world at the time of Christ. The second did not cease to be a true one, although only typical. But they both disappeared almost at once. That of the Gentiles, which was yet an honored institution among the most polished nations, has left only the ruins of monuments which anti-

quaries try to decipher. The priesthood of Aaron has not left even so much ; and in spite of their attachment to ancient customs, the Hebrews of our day cannot tell who are those among them who belong to the sacerdotal tribe of Levi. If some among them wear yet the name of Cohn—priest—none can prove they have a right to the title, and it is said it is often a fraud.

But since the solemn moment in history when all those institutions disappeared, together with idolatry and the rites of Judaism, another priesthood has arisen which has filled the universe with its splendor. For the whole history of Christianity is, after all, the history of its priesthood. It began at the precise hour that Christ died on the cross for the sins of men, the only victim which could at any time be entirely acceptable to God. It will end on earth on the day of judgment, when Christ will come with his cross again, to call to his bosom, and carry in his train to heaven all those who will have, by their own free concurrence, merited to share in the fruits of his sacrifice.

If thus Christ has ever been the only true Priest, he has nevertheless given a participation of this high office to his apostles first, and afterward to those who were rightfully ordained in his Church. As to "the twelve," he said so himself at his Last Supper : "Taking bread, he gave thanks, and brake, and gave to them, saying : This is my body which is given for you, Do this for a commemoration of me. In like manner the chalice also after he had supped, saying : This is the chalice, the New Testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you." There is no question here of merely bread and wine, but of his body and blood. There is in those words a clear reference to his death on the cross the following day, showing an evident connection between both. Finally, by commanding them to do it themselves in commemoration of him, the intention is expressed of giving them the power to do it, as we know they did. It is not correct, therefore, to say that there are no texts of the New Testament indicating that the apostles wore the sacerdotal character. But even in case there were not, subsequent history would sufficiently supply the lack of them.

Be firmly persuaded, dear reader, that it is this supreme dignity granted by Christ to his apostles, which was the main source of their success, and supplied in them everything in which they were deficient. But this dignity belongs entirely to the supernatural order, and to see in it only the exterior circumstances of superintendence,

of material government, of keeping public order, is to misconceive entirely the character not only of the Christian priesthood, but of any priesthood whatever, when the essential functions of the office are considered.

Of the other sacraments instituted by Christ, a word has just been said of Baptism and the Eucharist. There is no possibility, and in fact no need, for the actual purpose, of even mentioning the others, except that of penance; since the remission of sins was so clearly attributed by the Saviour to his apostles in one of his manifestations after his resurrection. But this wonderful prerogative, as well as the administration of all other sacraments, belongs to the sacerdotal office; and the few words that have been said on the subject must suffice.

The last great cause of the success of the apostles to which we must allude, setting aside many others of less importance, is the organization visible in the Church, even in the apostolic age. To non-Catholic authors it looks as if there was no organization at all, and everything went on at random. Had such been the case the actual existence of Christianity would be perfectly inexplicable, and its duration after the beginning of the second century would have been an impossibility. As long as the apostles would have lived there might have been an apparent cohesion among Christians, owing to the respect they personally inspired. As soon as the last of them should have died, there would have been a total want of unity, as every thoughtful man must confess. It must, therefore, be concluded, in general, at least, that there was a real organization of the Church even in the apostolic age. What deceives men in that regard is that all the terms used in subsequent ages to designate that organization had not yet been introduced. There was no mention made of popes, of metropolitans, of patriarchs, in the sense used subsequently. The same name went often for bishops and priests. To the modern student it is a puzzle; it looks as if there was a universal confusion. Many non-Catholic writers conclude from this that all organization worthy of the name was posterior to the second century, and was due to "development," as they say. If they merely meant that there was development in the sense that liturgical and theological terms were better explained, and new names were given to old things, it would be perfectly just. But they go much further, and imagine in all possible good faith that those things were often radically changed, and yet Christianity remained the same. Thus

Professor Fisher thinks that the apostles and the bishops did not bear the sacerdotal character, which becomes visible in the Church only "from the time of Tertullian ;" and he attributes the change to "development." It is evident, however, that this would not be development, but radical change ; which cannot be supposed in a divine religion.

Of necessity, therefore, there was a strict organization in the Church from the time of the apostles ; and it must have been the real "germ" of what followed, in order that there should be a legitimate development. The apostles knew that they had been placed by Christ at the head of the Church, as his representatives. They knew that they were, after him, the source of all authority and power. They were persuaded that it was not on their part a sacrilegious presumption, to believe that they could transmit their authority and power to others, who would be their successors. Let these be called in Greek bishops, presbyters, elders, whatever you like, the gradation of office must have existed from the beginning, or development would never have brought it on in an institution claiming to come from the design of the Son of God.

The apostles knew, moreover, that what Christ had established, and they themselves developed after him, would last as long as the world, and would spread in all countries under the sun, and that never anything more would be absolutely required for salvation, of the Christians who were to appear on earth two thousand years after them, than they were authorized to require of those of their own time.

All these things will appear clearer and clearer, as we advance on our way. The position of the Rock, namely, Peter, will be more satisfactorily explained, when a number of necessary details will have been passed in review. These few words were absolutely necessary to give a first general view of the dignity conferred by Christ on his apostles, as the sure means of securing their success. No doubt the supernatural aspect it has taken in these considerations, is unwelcome to many men of our day, who prefer to judge of everything on earth by a material standard. But Christianity cannot be rightly judged by such a standard. If it had not come from heaven it might be subjected to that process of judgment. But then it would scarcely be worthy to be looked at ; or, rather, it would never have existed, since the shape it has taken from the beginning is not earthly, but just the reverse. Taking it in the form that Christ

gave it, it is truly a heavenly Mystic Body, and the apostles, being its heralds, must be appreciated according to a standard far above this earth, and second only to the one by which we are able to appreciate Christ Himself, “in whom dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead corporally.”

NOTE.—The reader will understand, that in this chapter, natural causes are not excluded as agents in the spread of Christianity. The whole book supposes them, and the author knows that God is the Author of nature as well as of grace. He merely wishes to establish firmly the truth that, alone and by themselves, they cannot account for the great fact under consideration. God does not exclude other agents than himself, since he has given them free will. He uses, in fact, an immense number of instruments; but all of them put together are as incapable of producing the great result, as in Homer, all the gods tugging at the end of the chain, held firmly by the hand of Jove, are unable to produce any impression upon it; whilst a single act of the Almighty's will can keep them suspended in space, or lift them up to the footstool of his throne.

This comparison is, however, faulty, as usual. Owing to free will, the puny fingers of men can touch the golden chord by which God moves the world, and add, actually and effectually, their mite to his all-embracing action.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE GENTILE WORLD CONFRONTING THE INFANT CHURCH.

THE faint outlines sketched in the last chapter, to impress the reader with the immensity of the task imposed on the apostles by their Master, could not give any sufficient idea of it, unless the chief nations to which they were commissioned to preach the Gospel are, briefly at least, considered apart. It seems at first sight a digression, and a long one, owing to the multitude of races into which mankind is divided. But it is not in fact a digression, since it is only an enumeration of the elements of which the future Catholicity of the Church was to be composed ; and by examining them in groups, the whole of it can be condensed in a moderate compass. It is, in truth, indispensable, since we do not look at the Church in her intrinsic character, but in her relation to the world, which must always be uppermost in these considerations. And because order is the first condition of lucidity, and will render the task shorter and more easy, it is intended to consider at the outset the nations of Syria and Chaldea, the nearest to Palestine, and the first to be evangelized ; then those of Africa, bordering on the Mediterranean and Red Sea ; later on, those of the East, as far as necessary for the present object ; finally, the races of the Northwest and West—Greece, Italy, Spain, and Germany, by which this part of the subject will be concluded.

1. *Nations of Syria and Chaldea.*

In the earliest period of history, as well as at the time of the promulgation of Christianity, and, it can be said, as in our own day, Syria has been a *colluvies omnium gentium*, a “mixture of all races,” chiefly when it is considered in conjunction with Chaldea, which could not be separated from it, at least in ancient times. Chaldea itself, from the remotest antiquity, was a receptacle of all

**nations.** George Rawlinson proves \* that if its inhabitants were in the main Cushites, there was among them a strong admixture of Turanians, because, as he remarks : "The language of the early inscriptions, though Cushite in its vocabulary, is Turanian in many points of its grammatical structure, as in its use of post-propositions, particles, and pronominal suffixes ; it would seem, therefore, scarcely to admit of a doubt that the Cushites of Lower Babylonia must in some way or other have become mixed with a Turanian people." Rawlinson would not have felt any difficulty on the subject, had he reflected that the best modern ethnographers class the Turanians among the Hamites, and consequently consider them as close allies of the Cushites, descended likewise from Ham ; but as he is himself of a different opinion, his language is but natural.

But the next observation of the same author is of much greater importance. It is this : "Besides these two main constituents of the Chaldean race" (the Cushite and Turanian), "there is reason to believe that both a Semitic and an Aryan element existed in the early population of the country. The subjects of the early kings are continually designated in the inscriptions by the title of *kiprat-arbat*, 'the four nations,' or, *arba-lisun*, 'the four tongues.' In Abraham's time, again, the league of four kings seems correspondent to a fourfold ethnic division, Cushite, Turanian, Semitic, and Aryan, the chief authority and ethnic preponderance being with the Cushites. The language also of the early inscriptions is thought to contain traces of Semitic and Aryan influence ; so that it is at least probable that the 'four tongues' mentioned were not mere local dialects, but distinct languages, the representatives respectively of the four great families of human speech." It is proper it should be so in the neighborhood of the old Tower of Babel.

This will suffice for ancient Chaldea, and proves the fact of a multitude of races living then in the country.

Syria requires a much longer discussion. Should we confine ourselves to Syria proper, giving it its extreme limits from Mount Taurus in the north to Arabia in the south, we would meet there a general mixing up of all primitive peoples. These were, firstly, *Hamites*, that is, the Canaanites who originally occupied the territory from the Orontes southward, all Palestine, consequently, west of the Jordan, with the Hauran, east of that river. Secondly, *Semites*, com-

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\* First Mon., ch. 111.

prising the Phœnicians along the sea (this is concluded from their language); the Hebrews in Palestine ; the Ammonites and Moabites adjoining the Dead Sea, the posterity of Lot ; and finally, the Syrians of the interior, or Aramœans, a powerful and early civilized race, spread from Damascus toward the east as far as the Tigris, occupying, consequently, Northern Mesopotamia, and adjoining the Medes. Finally, *Aryans* were found mixed up with Semites all along the northern limits of the territory, but chiefly in the northeast, from which side the Medes and Persians had long before invaded the country.

In the following chapters it will be proved that as early as the apostolic times this vast and most important country was almost thoroughly Christianized ; as if the providence of God intended to show from the very start, that the new religion was adapted to all races of mankind, the most civilized and the most uncouth. Syria, in its whole extent, comprised then, in the main, nations raised to the summit of intelligence and culture ; rich in all the productions of the East, where the Seleucidæ had carried their power farther still than Alexander himself. But in the mountains adjoining Armenia and Iberia, simple and primitive tribes lived happy and secluded from the world. From them all, Christianity received her converts, and thus realized the assertion of St. Paul that in Christ Jesus there are no Greeks and no barbarians, no Jews and no Scythians, but all are equally called to the light of the universal Gospel. And this at the very origin, since it will be clearly proved that the apostles evangelized the tribes of Syria before they turned their eyes toward the far Orient, or even toward the northwest and west—Greece or Italy.

But for receiving a more correct and striking impression of the phenomenon, we must for a moment consider this country historically, and also in its state of culture. Syria appears to have been primitively in the north an Aramœan country, inhabited consequently by Semites, Aram being one of the children of Sem ; and the race must have spread, not only over Syria proper, but also in Northern Mesopotamia. Hence the Assyrians were Aramœans, and the discoveries lately made around Nineveh have confirmed the previous conjectures of historians, and proved beyond contradiction that the people of Northern Mesopotamia were closely allied as a race to the Syrians proper, to the Hebrews, and the Arabs of the north. Features of body, language, and religion establish this

analogy. Thus we see a powerfully centralized empire swayed primitively by this race. But in Syria proper, west of the Euphrates, the country was divided originally among a number of petty princes, called in Scripture kings of Soba, of Maacha, of Damascus, of Emath, etc. ; all of them belonging to the Aramaean, that is, Semitic stock. Under the sway of the Persians, the Greeks, or the Romans, they had remained nearly the same.

The Phœnicians, along the Mediterranean coast, were also most probably of a Semitic origin, as their language proves sufficiently ; but the people known long before under the name of Philistines, farther south, belonged to the stock of Ham. At first a most powerful race, they had been broken down by David, and forced to remain quiet by Solomon. Yet their posterity remained in the country, and filled the cities of Ascalon, Azotus, Gaza, etc., where they never had been altogether absorbed, neither by the Phœnicians, Egyptians, or Hebrews. The Moslems alone destroyed them entirely, and left their cities in the desolation described by Lady Herbert, in the interesting little book called *Cradle Lands*.

Toward the east, Southern Mesopotamia was primitively inhabited by Cushites, as was just stated. We may with justice call them Chaldeans, whose name they bear. On this subject, however, there is a great divergence of opinion among learned men. The southern part of the territory was certainly in possession of the children of Ham.

Thus, in primeval times, the history of the country under consideration was chiefly swayed by native races, either Semitic or Hamitic ; and this lasted until, from Egypt in the south, and from Persia in the east, the country was invaded and subdued. From this time down, Syria and Mesopotamia, as well as Palestine, Phœnicia, and Babylonia, have always belonged to foreign masters. The Persian domination, particularly, endured from Cyrus down to its destruction by Alexander. The Hellenes then ruled it until the Romans came. But the Syro-Greek monarchy, under the successors of Alexander, deserves a moment's consideration. The Greek Seleucidae were mainly wretched princes, and their history on the whole is a succession of horrors. Yet some of them showed a powerful mind and an astonishing energy. The Persians, with their satraps at Damascus, had left scarcely any impress of their long-protracted dominion. We do not see that any attempt was made by them at introducing their manners, religion, and language among the native

races, if we except the southeastern portion, under the satraps of Babylon. This became almost an integral part of the Persian Empire ; but all over Syria, Palestine, and Northern Mesopotamia, the people had remained what they ever were ; and particularly there was not the least change in the prodigious variety of nations which has always characterized the country. The Seleucidæ did a great deal more to make of it a Greek territory ; still, they were successful only in a very small portion of it, as we are just going to see more in detail.

The greatest prince of this line of Greek kings is undoubtedly the first of them in point of time, Seleucus Nicator, one of the generals of Alexander. By policy, conquest, crimes also, and treachery, as usual in the pagan world, he became master of an immense empire, extending not only over the whole country we now consider, but likewise over Asia Minor, in the west, a great part of Persia, in the east, and even the distant regions of Bactria and Sogdiana, which Alexander had only temporarily subdued. He even attempted the conquest of India ; but seeing the impossibility of keeping it, he came to terms with Sandracottus of Palibothra on the Ganges, to whom he sent Megasthenes as ambassador, and who remained henceforth his firm ally. More will be said of this. For his capital, he built, first, Antioch, on the Orontes, and made it not only a magnificent Greek city, but also the chief emporium of the whole Orient. It became the most important metropolis of the world after Rome and Alexandria. In course of time other kings increased it ; its citizens had already built a second city adjoining the first, when Seleucus Callinicus was obliged, on account of the increase of population, to construct a third one ; and finally, Antiochus Epiphanes, a fourth. Each of them had its own walls, and around the whole a general inclosure rendered it more safe against any attack. Hence the name of *Tetrapolis*, which Strabo gives it. The magnificence of its edifices, the extent of its commerce, the celebrity of its schools, made it famous in all countries, and Ammianus Marcellinus called it later “a city known to the whole world.”

Antioch, from its foundation, was, and remained all along, a Greek city, until the Saracens took it. Hellenic manners, customs, religion, language, prevailed, no doubt, within its walls, but very little around it ; yet they spread gradually over a part of Syria and even of Palestine, most of all under the Romans.

We doubt not that on account of its trade with India and Bactri-

ana, along the roads so long kept up by the Persian kings, Antioch was, during a period at least of the power of the Selencidae, the most wealthy city of the world ; since Babylon had just lost its pre-eminence, never to recover it, and Rome had not yet acquired her universal sway. All these circumstances account for the Hellenic look it certainly had, and which cannot but strike the most cursory reader of the homilies of St. Chrysostom "to the people of Antioch." But the primitive population existing around the city, in the whole country, chiefly toward the east, remained what it had always been—an agglomeration of Semitic and Hamitic races, as different from the Greeks and Romans as they are to-day.

As late as the time of St. John Chrysostom, the country people of the neighborhood spoke only the Syriac dialect ; and it created every year a difficulty, when, at the time of Easter, they came to Antioch to partake in the joys of the religious festival.

Not only the Phœnician type was kept along the sea-coast, but the Hebrew race was pure in the interior of the country, as well as the Aramaean in the north, around Damascus, and all along the Northern Tigris and Euphrates. This will have to be kept in mind when we speak of the spread of Christianity over these extensive countries. Seleucus Nicator in fact succeeded only in giving Greek names to many ancient Syrian cities ; he did not transform the population.

As to the culture of the people a word only need be said, as it is too evident for contradiction. The primitive high civilization of Assyria and Phœnicia had indeed passed away, but only to be replaced by the higher culture introduced by the Persians. The relics of Nineveh have now revealed to the world the prodigious advancement of the Aramaean race, not only in arts and science, but also in comfort, and even luxury. We must not believe that their new foreign masters reduced them to the condition of slaves. What we will shortly say of the brilliant literature of Syria and upper Mesopotamia after the introduction of the Christian religion, will prove that the native race was not debased and degraded by its long subjection to the yoke of the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. It is true that the monuments of the pagan Syriac literature are now lost ; yet it must be considered as undoubted that the arts had not ceased to be cultivated in a country which, in the early part of the second century of our era, produced a Bardesanes, and in the fourth an Ephrem.

The sculptures preserved now forever in the European museums

of antiquities, prove that the Aramean was a noble race in every respect ; and the Christian literature of Edessa and Nisibis will convince us that the type had not changed at the epoch we now consider. The Bedouin Arab, the actual low Hamite of the Persian Gulf, had not then brought into the country the poor specimens of humanity preserved in Mr. Layard's books, and which produce such a strange impression when, in the plates, the present inhabitant, as delineated by the author, is compared with the forms of the primitive people, engraved on the hard slabs where they have been sculptured nearly four thousand years ago, to be unearthed in our day.

Of the pagan literature of Syria nothing is now known ; for the renown of the Alexandrian schools has attracted so much attention in modern times that the institutions of learning founded at Antioch by the Seleucidæ, and at Edessa previous to the Abgar dynasty, have been altogether lost sight of. Yet it must not be forgotten that Seleucus built Antioch precisely at the time when the love of learning spread itself all over the East. Attalus of Pergamos, the inventor of *pergamena* for manuscripts, and Ptolemy of Egypt were, at that epoch, both at a small distance from Syria, nobly using their wealth and multiplying their efforts to surpass each other, in order to try who should procure for their chief cities the larger number of books.\* The result was, for the comparatively small city of Pergamos in Asia Minor, a library of two hundred thousand volumes, and for that of Alexandria, seven hundred thousand. No account has been left us of the library of Antioch, or Edessa ; but there is no doubt that Seleucus, who introduced several thousand Athenians into the city he founded on the Orontes, did not leave them without the means of gratifying their taste for literature. This we know for certain, that soon after the establishment of Christianity, a flourishing school rose up within its walls. In fact, the phenomenon was not confined to Antioch, the native city of Chrysostom ; but all over Syria, centers of Christian learning arose in many cities ; those of Cæsarea, Edessa, Nisibis, being the most renowned after that of Antioch.

It was perhaps partly on account of all those circumstances that Peter chose first the noble city on the Orontes for his See ; and it is known from the Acts of the Apostles that it was there the Christian name originated. Soon after, the Church, to which devolved the

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\* Vitruvius in *Præf.*, lib. vii.

inheritance of what was worth keeping in pagan culture, founded at Antioch a school which ranked directly after that of Alexandria. The moderate exegesis of Scripture which prevailed in it took from the start a middle course between the allegorical conceptions, often far-fetched, of the African Church, and the low anthropomorphist interpretation of others; John Chrysostom is a perfect model of it. Among the remarkable men the same school produced, we can name Theophilus, the author of the celebrated work addressed to Autolycus; Lucian, as well known for his learning as for his martyrdom; Meletius, so celebrated in the history of Arianism, and not to be confounded with the Egyptian bishop of Nicopolis; Flavian, the venerable friend of Chrysostom; Cyril of Jerusalem, the illustrious author of the "Catecheses;" Theodorus of Mopsuestia, etc. This short list is sufficient to show the intellectual range of the Syrian Fathers of the Church belonging to Antioch, and such a rapid formation of a great Christian school proves that anteriorly to Christianity the city must have been a great literary center, which we know to be the fact by several allusions of ancient writers, who, however, do not give us details such as we possess so abundantly with regard to Alexandria.

But considerations of the same kind on Edessa and Nisibis are calculated to produce a stronger impression still, on account of the peculiarly Syrian character of those cities, altogether unaltered by the recent spread of Greek civilization. They are generally placed by geographers in Lesser Armenia; but this western part of it was then altogether Syrian in its culture and customs. Little is known in antiquity of these two cities. Nisibis is certainly the most ancient of the two, as Edessa was in fact its colony. Some authors think also that Christianity flourished in Nisibis before it appeared at Edessa; although the direct correspondence of Abgar with our Lord, first given to the world by Eusebius of Cæsarea and Moses of Choren, as copied by them from the archives of Edessa, would certainly contradict that opinion. In both cities Christianity penetrated very early, and changed completely the manners of the people. But the fact which must chiefly attract the attention, is the culture of the country in very early times. Although no monument remains of ancient Syriac literature, what is known for certain of Bardesanes, who flourished toward 150 of our era, shows that there must have been previously a rich development of literary lore in the country. Born of Christian parents—a proof that the religion of Christ had penetrated into the wild mountains of Armenia at least at the end

of the first century—Bardesanes, according to Eusebius and St. Jerome, became celebrated all over the East for his extensive knowledge, his fecundity as a writer, and his superiority over his age as an orator and a poet. His hymns particularly were sung all over Syria, and continued to be popular over the East until, one hundred and fifty years later, St. Ephrem composed a whole book of lyrics to counteract the gnostic venom of the others. For, unfortunately, Bardesanes, at first a fervent and orthodox Christian, became, after the death of his protector and friend, King Abgar Bar Maanu, a partisan of the cosmogonic ideas of Valentinus. It must be said in extenuation, however, that from the few fragments of his works which remain preserved in the homilies of Ephrem, and in some compositions attributed to Origen, his doctrine of Eons calls to mind to a certain degree the Hindoo cosmology contained particularly in the first chapter of the “Laws of Menu,” except that Bardesanes introduced in his conceptions the elements of Christ and his Church.

Be this as it may, it is indubitable that the productions of Bardesanes, as we know them from report and from a few fragments, were of the highest character ; and since he published his works Syriac literature had to be considered as one of the most splendid in the whole Orient, and this is all that interests us for the moment.

The same must be said, and in a higher degree yet, of the works of St. Ephrem, who appeared later. His eloquence, his poetical talent, his admirable exegesis of Scripture, place him at once among the most honored Fathers of the Church ; and by the abundant materials of it which we still possess, it may be said that the Syriac language shall never perish. Who has not shuddered in reading what Ephrem said of the last judgment ? who has not shed tears over some of his “*cantus funebres*” ? Nisibis and Edessa became in a short time thoroughly Christianized, and with them the whole northern part of Mesopotamia, the seat of the old Assyrian Empire, occupied yet by the same race which had flourished at Nineveh.

Thus the first look cast on one of those old monarchies proves the power of the Church in renewing the world ; but it is particularly at the end of these considerations that we will have to insist on such conclusions. We merely describe here the world which the Gospel had to meet at its first promulgation.

What has been said so far comprises only the northern or Semitic part of the country. Unfortunately there are not so many data with regard to the southern or Hamitic portion. And this comes

chiefly from two difficulties. The first regards the Phœnician power in the West, and the second is derived from a deep obscurity which involves the Chaldean race in the East. Phœnicia was just dying out as a distinct division of the ancient world. Alexander of Macedon had crushed its power at a blow by the capture of Tyre, and we do not hear any more of the Phœnicians in history. Their distant western colony of Carthage remained alone, and cannot form a part of our present inquiry. Yet, although the political and commercial power of Phœnicia had suddenly collapsed, the people yet remained, and the race had not been destroyed by the Macedonian army. The inhabitants of Tyre, Sidon, Aco, Arad, etc., with their ethnical peculiarities, were still the chief part of the population along the Mediterranean coast of Syria, and if we find later on that the whole country became Christian in a very short time, the object we are pursuing will certainly have been attained for this small but celebrated part of the world.

The difficulty with respect to Chaldea is of a different kind. We might say likewise that Babylonia was ending. The brilliant capital of the country had received its first blow from Cyrus, long before; Alexander, who died in its walls, left it to be quarreled over by his generals; but the main cause of its decay was derived from the building of Seleucia by Seleucus Nicator, who, after the foundation of Antioch, and his campaigns in the East, thought that Mesopotamia was more central for his vast empire than the magnificent city of Antioch. He constructed, therefore, the immense metropolis which he called Seleucia, at a short distance from Babylon, and thus the old capital of Nimrod and Semiramis went on decaying gradually until the prophecies of the Old Testament in her regard were completely fulfilled. With Babylon the name of Chaldea passed away—or rather was preserved only by the Christian Church, which kept forever the Chaldean rite. But the real difficulty is in the very name of Chaldea; some place it north as far up nearly as Media; others believe its original seat to have been the shores of the Persian Gulf. After reading the various details concerning the Chaldeans and their country, all begins to look as a myth, and the thoughtful inquirer asks himself what it is all about. It is impossible to enter into the discussion of this vexed problem; and in fact it is not needed. Something certain can be obtained as to the thing itself, whatever may be the case with respect to the name, and this is very nearly the solution of the problem: The lower or southern part of

Mesopotamia, from Assyria downward, together with the shores of the Persian Gulf, and many countries, besides, all around Arabia and the Red Sea, were inhabited by an ancient race which G. Rawlinson proves to have been Cushite. This is the only thing important, and here the question is confined to Babylonia alone. It was a Cushite country, Hamitic, consequently, and of a race bordering on the Turanian, if not Turanian altogether. This appears at first sight to shock all ideas of propriety. Was not the Cushite, or Hamite, or Turanian portion of mankind, at all times, the most degraded part of the descendants of Noah? In our modern ideas it is so, undoubtedly. In that old and primitive world, which begins now to open itself to our gaze, owing to the indefatigable researches of historians and antiquaries, it was not.

It is certain now that Africa was for many centuries at the head of what we call civilization. Egypt is actually proved to have been the first great empire of the world. Ethiopia, probably, preceded Egypt, although this is generally discredited at this day. At any rate, no one can deny that the African races spread at first extensively over the globe, and may be called the main factors of primitive civilization. They formed then the main center of human history, and in all probability preceded the Asiatics in the development of power and activity. The modern discoveries concerning the Turanian race, which the best ethnographers identify with the Hamitic, can very well stagger the skeptics of our day.

It is indubitable that the posterity of Cush was at the head of this early movement of civilization. Their caravans, all over Africa, their invasion of all the southern and eastern coasts of Arabia, their commerce with Persia and Hindostan, at the most ancient epoch, are now facts which cannot be gainsaid. The Persian Gulf was for a long time the center of their power, and from this point most probably they finally reached Mesopotamia and established themselves at Babylon, where they remained for many centuries the dominant race. The name of Chaldeans, that was given them, is indeed a puzzle, but this is of no importance in the question under review. Their power, it is true, finally succumbed to that of the Persians, first, and of the Greeks afterward. But even the building of Selencia, which brought on the decay of Babylon, and the occupation of the country by the Syrian kings, did not prevent the primitive race from existing. The people, therefore, to which Christianity was to be preached, on the Lower Euphrates, were in the main

Cushites, and belonged in great part to a stock altogether different from that of the North ; and if Christianity penetrated as early and as easily among them as among the Aryan races of the North and the West, the conclusion will be irresistible that the new religion was acceptable not only to this last family of mankind, but that the difference of races, high or low, intellectual or the reverse, could not be an obstacle to its diffusion. We will have, before long, many other convincing proofs of it.

For the present, speaking only of the Cushites of Lower Mesopotamia, near and below the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates, as far down as the Persian Gulf, whose actual inhabitants, from the report of all travelers, are perhaps among the most degraded and miserable of all mankind, it must be confessed that there is a deep vail thrown over the origin of Christianity in that burning climate and on those desolate shores. Consult all the histories of the Church, written by Catholic or heterodox writers, and the first mention you find of the Chaldean Church refers to the spread of Nestorianism among them in the fifth century. It looks strange that when, undoubtedly, the upper regions of the country, halfway along the northern course of the two great rivers, were already thoroughly Christianized and offered the spectacle of a well-organized and highly-cultured Church, the lower country, where an apostle could bring, in a few days, down along the deep and noble streams, the good news of the Gospel, did not hear of it. We intend to lift the vail up shortly, and show what had been with them the beginning of a religion which could furnish so many illustrious names to our martyrology under Sapor, in the fourth century of our era.

The reader has thus far gone over nearly the whole country whose ethnical character was the first object of study in the present inquiry. A word, however, must yet be said of the numerous nations at the north of it, that is, those of Cappadocia, Iberia, Colchis, etc., leaving apart Armenia, which deserves to be studied separately. Of the others, little is known in antiquity ; but they appear to have belonged to the same ethnic type, with the exception of the inhabitants of Colchis, evidently of a Semitic stock. All ancient and modern ethnographers agree in this, that the Colchidians differed from all their neighbors south of the Caucasus, and belonged to a southern race, evidently Semitic. The numerous other tribes between the Black Sea and the Euxine, were probably Aryan or Japhetic, mixed up with Turanian or Scythic ; and naturally enough, at the time of

Christ, had yet that wild look, which was the first character of Japhetism. Strabo visited the country at that very epoch, and represents it as half-barbarous, with strange customs. But there is one of them which has not been sufficiently remarked, although certainly of a very striking character. It is, that in many parts of that extensive territory, chiefly in Cappadocia and Pontus, there were yet large tracts of country under the immediate control of priests, with "sacred attendants," often to the number of many thousands; real theocracies, in fact, with which the kings or political rulers of these districts took good care not to interfere. The temples and "sacred groves" were, according to Strabo, dedicated to some Persian deities,—he mentions Anaitis in particular. To give an idea of this strange fact, we quote a few passages: "The temple of Mēn is celebrated at Ameria, a village city—in Pontus—inhabited by a large body of sacred menials, and having annexed to it a sacred territory, the produce of which is always enjoyed by the priest." "Above Phanaraea is Comana in Pontus, of the same name as that of Greater Cappadocia, and dedicated to the same goddess." Going back to the description of Greater Cappadocia, we find the following startling passage: "In the Anti-Taurus are deep and narrow valleys, in which is situated Comana, and the temple of Enyos, which they call Ma. It is a considerable city. It contains a very great multitude of persons who, at times, are actuated by divine impulse, and of servants of the temple. The city is inhabited by Cataonians, who are chiefly under the command of the priest, but in other respects subject to the king. The former presides over the temple, and has authority over the servants belonging to it, who, at the time I was there, exceeded in number six thousand persons, including men and women. A large tract of land adjoins the temple, the revenue of which the priest enjoys."

A little farther down Strabo mentions "a temple among the Venasii, with buildings capable of receiving nearly three thousand servants. It has a tract of land attached to it, very fertile, and affording to the priest a yearly revenue of fifteen talents."

Speaking of Iberia, directly south of the Caucasus, the same writer mentions the wonderful fact that "the inhabitants of this country are divided into four classes: the first, "that from which the king is appointed;" "the second consists of priests;" "the third is composed of soldiers and husbandmen;" "the fourth comprehends the common people."

This remarkable statement, with the previous ones, brings naturally to the mind the castes of Hindostan, which is, nevertheless, a far-remote country, having at the time no connection whatever with Iberia ; but it is well known that the regions comprised between the Black Sea and the Euxine were on the track of the largest migrations from Central Asia to Europe, at the time of the dispersion of the Aryan races.

When this social and religious state is compared with that of Syria and Chaldea, one almost imagines they are two distinct worlds having scarcely anything in common. Yet, Christianity spread as rapidly, and nearly as early, in one country as in the other, in spite of their primitive differences in character and worship.

So far, in these considerations on the races of men flourishing around Palestine, no mention has been made of their religion ; yet it must not be kept out altogether, as it was certainly one of the greatest obstacles to the spread of Christianity in the East. It is sure that the polytheism of Greece and Rome opposed a sturdy resistance to the zeal of the Christian apostles ; Rome was yet nearly half-pagan in the fifth century ; and it required the long-continued devastations of the northern barbarians to prepare the way for the complete religious unity of Europe in the middle ages, by thoroughly destroying idolatry. But in the East the sensuous and profoundly immoral polytheism which prevailed was still more opposed to the introduction of the pure Christian worship. After all the modern researches of historians, we know thoroughly the cult of Melcarte and Saturn among the Phœnicians, of Astarte and Adonis in Syria, of Mylitta and Bel in Chaldea, of Anaitis in Southwestern Persia, without mentioning a thousand inferior divinities. It is indeed a matter of surprise to see to what depth of corruption all the races belonging to the Semitic stock, if we except the Hebrews, had finally arrived. Some modern writers, indeed, seem to imagine that the Semitic stock is naturally the most religious, and the Aryan the least superstitious of all mankind ; and reflections of this sort are indulged in even by the author of *Lothair* as perfectly incontestable. In these speculations, it is true, those writers think only of the branch of the stock which originated the Jewish and the Christian religions, but to express clearly their ideas, they would do well to choose another term than *Semitic* ; because, with the exception of the descendants of Eber through Abraham, all the other branches of the family of Sem became perfect

slaves to a most sensuous and degrading idolatry, far worse than Hellenism.

To give a very striking and yet true idea of it, a most simple reflection will suffice: It is known how the primitive polytheism of the Romans was first corrupted by the far more anthropomorphist idolatry of Greece—and, to speak only of one of their gods, how their original Jupiter or Diespiter was superior to the Zeus of the Hellenes. Yet, after they had been thoroughly imbued with the low and degrading ideas of Grecian popular religion; when Jove, Venus, Mercury, etc., were for them what Zeus, Aphrodite, Hermes, etc. were for the pagans of Athens, a far lower depth of corruption suddenly opened under their feet as soon as Eastern, that is, Syrian and Chaldean, mythology was introduced at Rome. We refer the reader to the splendid and perfectly truthful pages of Champagny in his *Césars*, and chiefly in his *Antonins*, on the subject, for the complete explanation of our meaning. But there is a fact in the history of the Roman Empire which alone must bring on a perfect conviction of it. It is the picture left indelibly on the mind when Elagabalus brought to the Roman senate his "god" *Elagabal* to be admitted among the Roman deities, or rather placed above them all. The "god" was coming from Emesa on the Orontes, and was merely a "black stone" of a conical shape. The crazy debauchee then emperor, married him later to the Phœnician Astarte, who was brought from Carthage for the occasion. All are acquainted with the follies of the supposed son of Caracalla, who disgraced the imperial purple during four long years of unimaginable cruelties and immoralities; but this ridiculous ceremony of the marriage of both idols is treated seriously by the author of the "Mythologie" appended to the *Biographie Universelle* of Michaux. "L'extravagance du prince," he says, "posait au fond sur des idées orthodoxes. Elagabale était le soleil, et comme tel, qui lui convenait mieux que . . . la Lune Astarté?" These are indeed strange "orthodox ideas," but the thoughtful reader of those "extravagances" sees a great deal more in the fact, and in the long procession which characterized the absurd event in Rome. The son of Mœsa, at the time he was called to the throne by the rebellion of the army of Macrinus, was priest of the Sun at Emesa: it was in the religious precincts of a Syrian or Phœnician temple that he had been brought up; and all his occupations had been so far limited to the ceremonies of the worship of the Sun. Certainly, nothing in polytheism appears

to be nobler than the adoration of the celestial luminary, the most expressive image of the Creator himself ; and, speaking abstractedly of circumstances, to "worship the Sun" is certainly far more refined than to fall prostrate before the statue of Jove or of Venus. Yet, in point of fact, the cult of the Phœnician Elagabal was of a far more gross character than that of any Roman or Hellenic deity. To be convinced of it we have only to look at the priest himself, the infamous Elagabalus. Such as he was, with all his villainies, his atrocities, his debaucheries, the most contemptible and detestable of all Roman emperors—yet many others among them are justly notorious for all that can be despised and abhorred—the worst of them all, he was the fair and legitimate product of the religious rites of a Syrian mode of worship. To this had come at last the Semitic religion out of the Jerusalem temple ; and what was true of Emesa was true, likewise, of Edessa, of Nisibis, and of Palmyra, in the East, and of Tyre, and Arad, and Aco along the coast in the West. All now admit that this part of the world was a hotbed of putrid and decomposed matter, in point of morality and religion, and the evil had grown and increased from the time of Nimrod down, in spite of the striking example of the Jewish rites they could all witness, and of the pure doctrine of the Old Testament they could all read, since they all spoke Hebrew, or a language akin to it, belonging to the Aramæan stock.

We cannot enlarge any longer on this interesting subject ; and must pass on to the consideration of the countries south of Palestine, namely, Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia.

## 2. *Nations of Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia.*

At the time of Christ, it is true, Egypt was subject to the Roman power, but it was still the old country of the Pharaohs. The Persian dominion had curtailed the privileges of the priesthood, without, however, being able to even modify the idolatry of the country. All the Persian kings could do was to favor the introduction of the worship of some Syrian deities, because their own primitive monotheism had been, since the time of Artaxerxes Longimanus, corrupted by the polytheism of Western Asia, where they ruled for several centuries. The Egyptian religion had, therefore, consented, under compulsion, to admit in her bosom several of the infamous gods of Syria and Phœnicia ; but the more refined polytheism of Greece had been

studiously kept out, and certainly the Persian autocrats would not have consented to its admission. Independently, however, of this indubitable religious policy of the rulers, the people were at all times adverse to the reception of new gods. The Egyptians appear, through all their history, perfectly wedded to their native superstitions ; and as they considered themselves, in all things, chiefly in religious matters, the wisest of mankind, they never showed that pliancy so remarkable in the Romans of the later ages.

The pressure exerted upon the Egyptians by Persia was altogether removed by the Ptolemies, who, after the death of Alexander, ruled the country, and began their administration by restoring to the Egyptian priesthood a great part of their former privileges. The Roman emperors, after them, continued this policy. It is certainly very remarkable that all the buildings erected throughout the country under the Ptolemies and the Romans, are altogether Egyptian in style and surroundings. Everything in them betokens the same primitive religion and customs ; hieroglyphics, mythology, astronomic details bring back the mind to the oldest time of the Pharaohs. Nothing could better prove it than the mistake of those French "savans" who, just at the beginning of this century, having found the celebrated zodiacs engraved at Denderah and Esne, thought they had fallen on the sure proof of the high antiquity of the Egyptians. These very learned men of philosophical France thought they had finally discovered, in those far-renowned zodiacs, a sure proof of the actual aspect of heaven, going back to fifteen or seventeen thousand years before Christ ; an unmistakable token, in their opinion, of the unreliability of the Bible chronology. A more calm, unprejudiced, and thorough investigation ascertained the age of these astronomical devices, and proved that they could not be older than the Ptolemies.

Until the coming of Christ, consequently, Egypt had remained the same ; a strange country, indeed ; the wonder of all antiquity, and of our own time, when everything belonging to it is studied with such avidity and success. But what is most striking in its history is the unchangeableness of the people, and of their institutions. The last discoveries, made a few years back, and going on in our very day, prove it beyond possible dispute. The actual Egyptologists cannot find out the time when Egyptian civilization began ; the higher up they go in their investigations, the more they bring to the light of day a state of things exactly alike to that of more

modern times. Not only religion and government seem to be the same, but the smallest details of social, civil, and domestic life are perfectly similar, in the few monuments which remain of the first six dynasties, and on those of the last of the Pharaohs. The partisans of "continuous progress," so numerous in our day, have often, in their researches, fallen suddenly on some remains of architecture, sculpture, or domestic utensils in Egypt, of a coarser and ruder appearance; and they thought directly that they had alighted on a sure proof of a high antiquity, going up nearer to barbarism. In most cases they discovered at last that those "remains" were not as old as they appeared, were even more recent than others far superior in style; only the artists had been more careless and neglectful.

This unchangeableness appears also in the physical aspect of the country, which looks as if natural laws could not produce any effect on it. The priests told Herodotus that the Nile was the creator of the country, and the mouth of the river was constantly moving farther north, owing to the constant accumulation of alluvial soil. It had taken, they said, ten thousand years to spread out, and make, as it were, the ground itself, from Thebes to the Delta existing in their time. Yet in our days, between two and three thousand years after Herodotus, the Delta is almost precisely as it was in his time. Alexandria, certainly, at this day, twenty-four hundred years after it was built by the Macedonian conqueror, is exactly at the place of its foundation with respect to the mouth of the Nile, namely, on an island between the sea and the Lake Mareotis. The geological change, which must have taken place, is scarcely perceptible!

But we must look more particularly at the people themselves, to know what alteration they have experienced; because the Egyptians exist yet in the Copts. To what race do they belong? Where did they come from? What change did they undergo?

George Rawlinson himself could not properly classify the Egyptians. He merely says in his *Herodotus*,\* "The whole valley (of the Nile) was peopled from Asia; and to this day the inhabitants bear the evident marks of an Asiatic and Caucasian origin. . . . The color and features, as well as the conformation of their skull, show that the immigration was one of those where a new race took entire possession of the land, scarcely, if at all, amalgamating with the aboriginal population."

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\* Vol. ii., p. 285.

In some other passage of the same work, Rawlinson states that, most probably, they came from Asia through the northeast of Egypt, consequently from the north of Arabia. Yet all ethnographers agree that they were not Arabs, nor of a Semitic stock, but they belonged to the Aryan race. No one, therefore, must imagine that they were of the posterity of Ham, to which Africa seems to have been given as a dwelling-place ; and on the innumerable monuments still existing in that country, the various races of men are vividly represented ; and it is easy to distinguish the Egyptians from the Syrians and Phoenicians, or Jews of the North, on the one side, and from the Ethiopians, Arabs, and negroes of the South, on the other. Thus they are probably Japhetic—a strange conclusion of science !

From a careful examination of these monuments it is easy to ascertain that the Copts, still numerous in Egypt, are the descendants of the former subjects of the Pharaohs. The Moslem Arabs and Nubians, who live among them, cannot be mistaken for Copts ; and although, according to the best-informed travelers, there is certainly some difference between these last and the Egyptians represented on the monuments, it can be easily explained by the very dissimilar circumstances of their lives, and by the long and degrading subjection to which the race has been reduced since the conquest of the country by the Mussulmans, in the seventh century of our era. The old Egyptians and the actual Copts are by common consent the same people.

These reflections are sufficient for the present purpose. The country and its inhabitants have not changed perceptibly during the last five thousand years, except in two respects : First, the monuments have gone to decay since the establishment of Christianity, which destroyed idolatry, the *raison d'être* of the monuments ; and the well-being of the people has disappeared since the Moslem invasion, as was the case in all countries subjected to the same scourge. But the first change, namely, that operated by Christianity, has undoubtedly been the most remarkable—we intend to describe it in detail, when the time arrives. It is enough at this moment to bring the reader's attention to the fact that the hitherto “unchangeable” Egyptians have been once suddenly transformed from steadfast worshipers of Amun-Ra, Osiris, and Isis, into faithful servants of Christ and dutiful children of the Church. Those writers of our time who pretend that the new religion spread naturally in Egypt, because it found a congenial soil wherever the Roman power had

extended its sway, do not reflect on the indubitable details that have been just given. It was not the Romans who accepted Christianity in Egypt, but the Egyptians themselves, of the old race existing still in the Copts, a race until that time extremely tenacious of its superstitions, and very little prepared for the Christian faith. All that the Romans, and before them the Ptolemies, had done in the religious line proved it. Acknowledging the wrong policy of the Persians, they removed all the disabilities Cambyses and his successors had imposed on the priesthood and religion of the country. Instead of going on with the spoliation of the temples and the carrying away of the statues which could be removed, both the Ptolemies and the Romans brought back the statues—this will be further on stated in detail—and built a large number of splendid new temples, all devoted to the old worship of the Pharaohs, and perfectly alike to the former ones, so as to be undistinguishable from them. This is sufficient to prove that the worship remained altogether the same. There is no need of proving how fatal an obstacle this would have been to the establishment of Christianity, if it had not been the work of God, and a supernatural religion. For all the branches of the subject considered in this chapter, it is sufficient to refer to the details given previously in *Gentilism*. The degrading process going on for so many centuries in the Egyptian belief and morals, as well as in all other countries, could not be arrested but by a heavenly interposition. Rome had not done, and could not do anything against it. Nay, Rome had taken to her bosom the impure rites practiced along the Nile, and Roman patricians, male and female, got themselves initiated into the mysteries of Isis and Serapis. Could this be called a preparation for the reception of Christian baptism and the participation in the Christian sacraments? The idea of naturally replacing, in three or four centuries, the solemn and hoary superstition of Egypt by the adoration of Christ, and the humble simplicity of his religion, is sufficient to give a shock to all the notions of logic, and prostrate in the dust all the reasoning faculties of man. Suppose the apostles to be mere men, and to have undertaken this task without the help of Heaven, they would have deserved to be called demented, and the most absolute failure would have been the result of all their efforts.

Libya follows Egypt; and a word on the subject will suffice. This vast and dreary region, girded on the north by the Mediterranean Sea, from the country of the Pharaohs in the east to Mauri-

tania in the west, had long before received in its bosom the Greek colony of Cyrene, which, encroaching gradually on the surrounding nations, had expanded into a state powerful enough to wage war occasionally on Egypt itself. But with the exception of that Hellenic colony, the whole country was inhabited by wild tribes, described by Herodotus with an astonishing accuracy, and remaining nearly in the same state to our very days ; all coming, however, from a Syro-Arabian origin. The introduction of Christianity among them would have been a laborious task, owing to their barbarous manners and immoral customs ; the sweeping rush of the Saracens in the seventh century prevented it. There is no need of mentioning that the Cyrenaica was early Christianized, but as it was Hellenic, it will be embraced in the review of the Grecian tribes. In the process of the narrative the occasion will naturally present itself of giving a general description of the native tribes of Africa, in connection with the efforts made by zealous men to introduce Christianity among them ; and the general opinion that it has been constantly a failure may be considerably modified by the facts which will then be brought forward.

A step even in that direction must be taken presently by a somewhat longer study of the Cushites or Ethiopians, whose country was certainly one of the first to receive the good tidings of the Gospel. George Rawlinson, in his *First Monarchy*, has thrown a vivid and unexpected light on this great primitive race, of which so little was known before him ; and we could not select a safer guide. In his researches he restores to it many branches which other writers of eminence had considered as separate. Thus he proves that Scripture is right in calling Nimrod a son of Cush, and consequently in making the early Babylonians Cushites ; and he establishes firmly his opinion against such opponents as Heeren, Bunsen, Max Müller, and Prichard. He likewise revives the long-lost belief in the celebrated division of the Ethiopians into western and eastern, originated by Homer, and for many centuries admitted as true, but rejected afterward for various reasons which Rawlinson disproves. He shows finally the wide-spread extension of the race in the most remote times, and gives it again that proud pre-eminence in ancient history of which modern criticism had deprived it.

After these preliminaries, well laid down at the very beginning of his first volume, he gives in the second the physical characters of the various races of Chaldea during the second Babylonian empire,

and he ascribes to the Cushites—which, he thinks, comprised yet a third of the population of Babylon—an ethnic type approaching to the negro. In this supposition the early introduction of the religion of Christ among them, and the persistence with which they have since been faithful to it in Africa, would be most remarkable and striking. But the opinion of G. Rawlinson runs here counter to that of all modern ethnographers, and to the most reliable travelers of recent times. They all agree that the features of the Nubians and Abyssinians—real Cushites—have absolutely nothing of the negro peculiarities, except the color, which even is not with them purely black, but of a deep olive hue. It seems indubitable that the modern Ethiopian race approaches the Caucasian in all its chief features, and Rawlinson himself will not deny they are Cushites, not negroes. They belong, consequently, to a noble stock, and no one can be surprised that they were the founders of the first brilliant empire of Babylon. They spread at the time more extensively than any other people of that early age, at least as known to us ; for they occupied not only a great part of Central Africa, besides Southern Mesopotamia, but in general all the coasts of Western and Eastern Arabia, the whole of Southern Persia as far as the Indus, and an extensive tract of Southwestern India itself. The type was most probably that of the modern Nubians ; and the wretched half-negroes who now drag a miserable existence around the Persian Gulf and in Southern Mesopotamia, if they come from them, have strangely deteriorated from their ancestors, owing to the climate of the country, and the hardships of every kind they had to go through. They were at the time of Christ great travelers and traders, and so they had been from time immemorial. Their caravans, in Africa alone, carried precious stuffs and perfumes from the Red Sea, in the East, to the Lake Tchad in the West, and from Egypt, in the North, to the Soudan and the great lakes of Africa in the South. The monuments they raised in Nubia and in Meroë astonish yet the modern traveler. It is true Egyptologists now deny that they imparted anything of consequence to the country of the Pharaohs, and the reason on which they chiefly rely is the wording of inscriptions on the monuments, which, it appears, suppose always that Egypt, in her relations with Ethiopia, was the ruling country, and Ethiopia far inferior and subordinate. Opinion, it seems, has now pronounced on the subject, and there is, after all, no interest in reviving the question, and calling for a different verdict. Yet one might be allowed

humbly to say that it is the general habit of all nations, but it was so more prominently in ancient time, that each of them attributed to itself every advantage and superiority, and purposely tried to deprecate its neighbors and represent them in an inferior light. One might enlarge on the subject, and bring on many striking examples taken at random through the whole range of history ; and thus the superiority of Egypt over Ethiopia, derived from the monuments, is not unobjectionable.

But without reviving a question which is, after all, of no great import, we maintain that the Ethiopian race was a noble one, most tenacious of its customs, proof against change in all respects, wholly different from the Egyptian, and native of Africa, whilst the Egyptians were not. This is all our present object requires, as it prepares the ground for proving later on that the success of Christianity in that forlorn country is a new proof of the divine mission intrusted to her. There can be no doubt that by implanting the new religion in Meroë and Axum the only necessary step was taken to subdue to it the whole of Central Africa. But to do this, the religion of Christ was placed in contact, or rather front to front, with a most strange people, which had never known the yoke of Rome, whose climate had killed at one blow the powerful army of Cambyses, and prevented Persian customs from penetrating into the country, and which in more recent times has been on all occasions an insurmountable barrier against the universal sway of Mahometanism in Africa. This is all we claim, and no learned man can object to this.

But it is time to turn to the East and Northeast, where the world presented, at the epoch we study, an aspect not yet witnessed by the reader, and deserving his serious consideration.

### 3. *Nations of Persia and Armenia.*

These vast regions, stretching forth from Mesopotamia and the Caspian Sea to the very eastern coast of Asia, were then the possession of Aryan races in the western half of it, and of Turanians in the eastern. At first sight it looked as if Christianity, at the moment of confronting those nations, was sure of a friendly reception, and complete triumph. Yet it is here chiefly that the failure reproached to it by many writers of this age appears most incontestable, at the same time that it must have been most unexpected. Our only concern is with regard to the general physical and moral outlook ; and

as the field is so vast, it will at least give an idea of the immense work Christ has imposed on his disciples. The Persian empire must be the first object of investigation ; later on, Hindostan ; and finally, the farthest Orient.

J. C. Prichard in his *Natural History of Man*\* proves better, we think, than any other writer on the subject, the identity of the early Persians with the Hindoos. They were Aryans ; and the Parthians who replaced them in the East belonged certainly to the same race. Tacitus called their dominion in his time, *Imperium Orientis*, and according to the elder Pliny,† it was divided into eighteen provinces, which he calls *regna*. Arsaces was the founder of the Parthian empire, properly so called, in 256 B.C. ; and in the time of our Lord it was in all its glory. In its struggle with the Roman emperors it obtained great advantages ; and Mesopotamia was wrested from the grasp of Rome, never to return to it, in spite of the unsuccessful expedition of Julian.

The early Persians professed a religion superior even to that of Hindostan, and the tenets of Zoroaster were as near those of the primitive traditions as human weakness, left to itself, could keep them. The Parthians were the inheritors of that treasure, although there is no precise information as to their exact belief and worship. There must have been some progress of natural decline among them, since the Saasanidæ, who replaced the Arsacidæ in the middle of the third century of our era, undertook the revision of the Zends, in view of their preservation, and endeavored to revive the original Zoroastrianism of the country. In the absence of all documents, modern inquirers are reduced to conjectures. But, certainly, the Parthians, such as they were at the first promulgation of the Gospel, could not be called idolaters. They had been, it is true, connected politically with Syria ; and the Seleucidæ had ruled over them during the whole extent of their dominion. But history does not say that the Syrian kings had persecuted them for their religion, as they did the Jews, who, led by the Maccabees, successfully freed themselves from the yoke of their oppressors. It can, therefore, be safely assumed that the Parthians professed all along something like the noble monotheism of the Zends, probably somewhat altered by the dualism which became afterward more prominent in the religion of the Guebers or Parsees.

\* Edit. Edw. Norris, vol. i., p. 160, et seq.

† Lib. vi., § 29.

These considerations place before us, therefore, a noble race, and lay down before our eyes an immense field, where it seems that the new religion of Christ would be admitted with enthusiasm, and spread the glorious news of salvation to the most remote countries of Asia. Yet nothing of the kind precisely took place, although Christianity certainly at first obtained a great success, and many churches were founded in the Parthian empire. But to succeed in doing it, nations had to be encountered altogether different from those of the West, and the apostles of Christ, in order to Christianize the people of the East, were placed directly in contact with the most heterogeneous races, differing from each other in aptitude, religion, and social customs. Those who appeared to be better disposed offered, in fact, the strongest obstacles ; and the greatest number appeared totally unfit for the new religion.

An interesting remark, however, is the conclusion of this short discussion. In estimating the causes of the dissemination of Christianity, and the obstacles which it met, the inquirer must consider not only the natural aptitudes of the nations it had to conquer, or their human bias in the contrary direction. If this alone entered into the calculation, many facts connected with the conversion of the world to the religion of Christ would remain inexplicable ; this, chiefly, which comes for the first time under our notice, and which could be placed in a very strong light, namely, the contrast between the nations of Central Asia with those of Eastern Europe : Hindostan, Bactria, Persia, and Arabia on the one side, with Greece, North-eastern Africa, and Italy, on the other. In the first we see peoples deeply religious, and practicing still a noble ritual, derived from pure traditions not yet altogether obscured, nay, which could then have been revived by a reference to the books they revered and read constantly. In the second, nations profoundly corrupted by an excess of material civilization, and addicted to the debasing customs of the most sensual polytheism. Yet Christianity, after its first outburst, and the conquests which it certainly made in the far Orient at the time of its original promulgation, soon remained stationary there, and even disappeared in many notable places of its first triumph ; in the West, on the contrary, its victory lasted, increased in results, and became complete and final.

All the causes of this discrepancy which could be alleged for a natural explanation, we will not undertake to discuss at present. But it may very well be doubted if any *natural explanation* can be

satisfactory. The triumph of Christianity is undeniably a divine fact ; it was planned in heaven, and brought about by supernatural agency. If God chose human instruments for his work, the work itself was his. The words of St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, uttered in appearance only with respect to the rejection of the Jews, apply equally well to all races : “ Not of him that willeth . . . but of God that sheweth mercy.”\* In the designs of Providence, so far as we are able to read them, Europe was to be converted first, although apparently less prepared ; the gathering in of the other continents would be the task imposed on future European apostles, particularly on the Head of all, whom the middle ages justly called, emphatically, the “ Apostolic”—*Apostolicus*—namely, the Pope.

The chief difficulty of the present question, however, comes from the absence of authentic documents on the religious state of the Parthians at the time. But a branch of them—the Armenians—are better known in this regard, and furnish precious data which must not be neglected. Prichard, in his *Natural History of Man*,† states, without ambiguity, that “ they are recognized as an Indo-European nation ; their idiom is allied to the most ancient dialects of the Aryan race, the old Sanskrit ; and their early traditions connect them with the history of the Medes and Persians. They are a branch of the same stock with the people of Iran, though separated at an early period, and forming a peculiar people. . . . The Armenians are celebrated for the fine form and stature of the men, and for the regularity of features remarkable in both sexes. They have fair skins, with dark hair and eyes.”

It is known generally, that from early times Armenia was divided into “ Major ” and “ Minor,” the Euphrates being the separating line ; but the remarkable fact is not habitually so well attended to, that the first—Armenia Major, in the East—remained always more Oriental in its social and religious character ; whilst the second—Armenia Minor, in the West—was very early affected by the customs and worship of Syria and of Greece. Thus, around the lakes Van and Ooroomiah, in the eastern part of the country, the people paid their homage to Aramazd—Ahura Mazda or Ormuzd—the supreme God of Zoroaster ; whilst at Edessa, Nisibis, and other cities of Northern Mesopotamia, in the West, the cult was idolatrous, belong-

\* Romans, ix. 16.

† Edw. Norris’ edit., vol. i., p. 175.

ing either to the Syriac or to the Babylonian superstitions, chiefly to Nebo and Belus. We have, therefore, in a small compass, both the aspects noticed a moment ago : the comparatively pure monotheism of the Orient, and the debased polytheism of Syria and Hellas. Armenia is, consequently, a fair point of comparison between the East and the West, with respect to the early dissemination of Christianity ; and the result of it is a strange and most remarkable confirmation of the reflections previously made. Our holy religion spread earlier, and took a firmer hold in the western part of the country, given over to polytheism, than in the eastern portion, ruled by the doctrines of the great Zoroaster. For a long time Christianity was flourishing at Edessa and Nisibis, when no document remains as to the conversion of Armenia Major. Gregory the Illuminator, who was the real apostle of the whole country, east and west, in the third century, was educated at Cæsarea in Pontus, and it is thus from the heart of Asia Minor that the religion of Christ spread thoroughly among the Armenians. But what is more strange yet remains to be said : After the whole country had been converted to Christ, the king himself, Tiridates, going to Rome to meet Constantine, newly converted likewise, and the Bishops Aristages and James of Nisibis, taking their seats at Nice, among the Fathers of the Church ; when, consequently, all the Christian elements penetrating Armenia had come from the West, lately the seat of the most absurd polytheism, the first obstacle the nation met in the profession of its new faith came from the partisans of Zoroaster, their neighbors toward the east. The persecutions of Sapor, Chosroes, etc., began principally on account of religion, not of politics, and the monotheist worshipers of Ormuzd appeared more hostile to the Christian adorers of the true God, than to all polytheist nations around them. This is a most strange fact, which has not yet been explained, and which will require a more thorough discussion at our hands. Thus Providence laughs at our speculations, and what man thinks he can explain, as well as what he evidently cannot, render the problem altogether insoluble, unless God himself is considered as the main agent.

#### 4. *Hindostan and the Far Orient.*

The apostleship of St. Thomas in India is a vexed problem. After its admission in the affirmative by the Portuguese, when under De

Gama and the Albuquerques they established their first colonies on the Malabar coast, a reaction in criticism brought on an almost universal denial in the last, and at the beginning of this, century. The general opinion at this time supposes and considers as certain that the *Christians of St. Thomé*, as they are called, originated in a Nestorian colony of the fifth century ; but a more thorough criticism has lately rendered this view very problematical, and there is nothing improbable in the fact of the preaching of St. Thomas to the Hindoos. At any rate, it seems to be now altogether presumable that there were Christians in India long before the invasion of Nestorianism, although it is surely a fact that the *Christians of St. Thomé* were monophysists when discovered by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. The new Bollandists promise to us the strict demonstration of the apostleship of St. Thomas in India, when they reach in their work the 21st of December. The Gospel was certainly presented to the Hindoos for their acceptance at a very early age, if not in apostolic times ; and it was by the mass of them rejected. Yet the people of Hindostan belong certainly to the Aryan race, or rather, they are the root and origin of it, together with the Bactrians of old Aria. This is in open contrast to the opinion of the writers of the *Westminster Review*, who pretend that Christianity is specially adapted to the Aryan race, and to no other. We, on the contrary, firmly believe that all races can feel a leaning to the doctrines of Christ, which alone satisfy the aims and aspirations of the heart of humanity. On this account, as St. Paul so well expresses it, “there is not any more Gentile nor Jew, barbarian nor Scythian, slave nor freeman, but Christ is all and in all.” \*

Yet it is not to be denied that this first rejection of Christianity by the mass of the Hindoo people is a real difficulty. How can it be possible that the readers of the Vedas, the worshipers of Brahma, the men ruled by the laws of Menu, did not run to the embrace of the first ambassadors of Christ, when the Western adorers of Zeus and Aphrodite in Greece so willingly turned their backs on those attractive idols and renounced at once a religion so dear to sensuality and so pleasant to the imagination ? The solution of the difficulty must be delayed for a short time, and may be found in the social and religious position of Hindostan at the time, as the most recent discoveries reveal it to us. It was certainly the epoch of the prevalence there

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\* Col. iii. 11.

of Sivaism and Buddhism, and both are still more opposed to Christianity than Hellenism.

Meanwhile it suffices for the present object to call a serious attention to the character of the people of Hindostan, with all the admirable qualities of the race, so well known at present ; but groaning at the time under the terrible restrictions of caste, which Buddhism was trying in vain to break off by the open preaching of atheism and *nirvana*. Millions and millions of human beings existed in that far-spreading continent of Eastern Asia, so widely different from the nations of Europe and of Africa, so completely isolated from all other races, forming in fact a world apart. Yet to them as well as to all Western tribes, perfectly unknown in the East, a message was offered in the same terms and form as it was presented to the Egyptian, or to the Greek ; without any dogmatic or moral change, to accommodate it to so heterogeneous a people. As will be proved, many accepted it, although the mass would not, at least in all probability.

That Christianity was to be offered to all races of men alike had been clearly announced by the numerous prophecies which foretold it ; that many individuals of all nations, without any exception, would receive the boon, and thus form a universal Church, was a necessary part of the same prophetic utterances. No one must be surprised, therefore, that the apostles understood it so, particularly since their divine Master had sent them "to teach all nations." But the remark is striking, when we read all the records, too scanty indeed, in which their labors and success are preserved, that it never came to their mind to discriminate between tribe and tribe, to make a distinction between them, as if all were not composed of *men*. They looked to them merely with regard to their common humanity. St. Paul has expressed it strongly in several passages of his epistles. Mankind was for them "the mystic Christ." He was to be born in all by regeneration ; and as they all came from one father—Adam—they were all to receive a new supernatural life from another divine father—Christ Jesus—the second Adam.

It was, consequently, natural in the apostles not to mind ethnology. If we do it at this moment, it is merely on account of the objections which are raised against the possibility of the Church of Christ ever being Catholic, owing to the difference of races; and likewise to show the difficulty of the enterprise. By establishing that the first ministers of the new religion succeeded everywhere, although they did

not take account of any ethnic dissimilarity, we reduce to its due proportions the pretended insuperability of the obstacle, which was, however, real. But at the same time nothing is more instructive than these considerations. They prove, in fact, the divine character of the work, since it cannot be denied that no human institution, of whatever kind, can adapt itself to all nations alike. All that the greatest statesmen or philosophers have ever been able to do, has been to extend their doctrines or laws to what is called one single nationality. Even in our day, when "the universal brotherhood" of man is so loudly proclaimed, no English minister of state will presume to frame for Great Britain a legislative programme adapted to the French nation, nor will an American lawgiver undertake to impose his liberal views on the distracted States of South America. With respect to religion, even, the greatest efforts of men, bold enough to invent new creeds, have always been limited to a single nation. If Mahometanism seems an exception, it is merely on the surface; the means of its propagation being the sword, it could not be intended to convert people by persuasion. The race, the real race to which it was confined, was the Saracenic, and afterward the Turkish; all the others had to submit as mere slaves.

The Christian Church alone announced that all nations would become "docile" under her instructions; and so it has been always before our times; and so it is more particularly at this very moment. The obstacles to such a project, insurmountable indeed to any human agency, disappear before the true apostolic ministry, and thus prove the divinity of its mission. For this reason, chiefly, is it most instructive to examine apart the various ethnic elements which went to form the Church from the very beginning.

Among those elements the Hindoo appeared most promising. The profoundly religious character of the race; the comparatively pure and primitive doctrine contained in the books which it continued to revere and to read; the solemnity of the national rites; the intellectuality of the Hindoo mind, so well adapted to the highest religious considerations; all these circumstances, well ascertained by modern Sanskrit scholars, went to inspire the hope that the claims of the new religion would be eagerly acknowledged by them, and the Christian Church would be extended by them to the very limits of the Eastern continent. We will have occasion, further on, to discuss the reasons of the failure of these anticipations.

In these considerations, no account is taken of the numerous

inferior races which, the same as at this day, existed in Hindostan. Their fate depended on the decision which the mass of the dominant race—namely, the pure Hindoos—would take. As they did not become Christian *en masse*, all those various nationalities continued to grovel in their low superstitions. It is remarkable that, at this moment, there is among these inferior castes a well-marked movement toward Catholicity. Numerous conversions take place among them, and it looks as if the main hope of the regeneration of those Eastern people depended on them. It is there surely that “the Gospel is preached to the poor.”

Finally, of the countries farther east than Hindostan, nothing can be positively stated with regard to apostolic times. The legend of Prester John, whose original seat was undoubtedly placed in Tartary, north of China, is of a much more recent date. Buddhism was then, as to-day, ruling over that vast territory, although probably it had not yet invaded more than the western part of it. But it was just in the way, and a long time would be required to replace it by a purer religion. The message of Christ had scarcely time to reach it when Mahometanism came to complicate still more the situation. But it was only a delay, and we know that for God “a thousand years are the same as a single day.”

Our scope naturally leads us back to the West, to look at the enterprising nations which were to form the true bulwark of the Church, and composed what has been called emphatically Christendom.

##### 5. *The Greek-speaking World.*

With a deep-felt pleasure do we finally turn our eyes to the West, to this Europe which was destined, during six or eight hundred years, to form a solid aggregation of states ruled by the same religious, moral, and social principles, under the name of Christendom. It was predetermined that this powerful organization should in the end rule the world, and obtain the hegemony of the globe; and this privilege Europe was to owe to her firm and undivided acceptance of Christianity. The Japhetic stock, what is termed now the Aryan race, had previously acquired complete possession of the Western continent, and we are brought to consider apart its chief elements, as they are known to us from history and ethnology, with a view to appreciate the facility or difficulty of the task imposed on the appointed ministers of the new religion. Many modern writers seem

to believe that these Western nations were naturally predisposed to receive it, and they imagine that to no other part of mankind was it attractive and acceptable. This question has just been touched with respect to the East and South : a somewhat more extensive treatment must be adopted for Europe, since on it the main argument hinges. Were the Greeks and Romans more ready by nature and education to become disciples of Christ ? What were the real leanings of their race, and what human hope could the apostles entertain of finding disciples among them ? First, let us glance at the Hellenes, or rather at the eastern inhabitants of Europe, apart from the Romans, or rather, the people of the west.

The argument on the opposite side could be presented in this wise : The Hellenes were the noblest race of mankind, fit, consequently, to receive the noblest religion ; and their polytheism happening to be giving way at the time under the keen argumentation of philosophy, they fell naturally a prey to the new faith, and became willing converts to Christian monotheism. Our first object must be to examine briefly these two propositions.

Physically, the Greeks, at the time of the propagation of the Gospel, were nearly the same they had always been from the Pelasgic period, nay, they have continued to be the same to this day. According to Prichard, in his *Natural History of Man*,\* "the Greek skulls of the collection of Blumenbach, consisting of 170 crania, are the most beautiful of all he possessed. In the head of the Apollo Belvedere we may probably recognize a good model of the physiognomy of their ancestors."

Pouqueville, quoted by the same writer,† assures us that "the models which inspired Apelles and Phidias are still to be found among the inhabitants of the Morea. They are generally tall and finely formed ; their eyes are full of fire, and they have a beautiful mouth, ornamented with the finest teeth. . . . The Spartan woman is fair, of a slender make, but with a noble air. The women of the Taygetes have the carriage of Pallas when she wielded her formidable *egis* in the midst of a battle. . . . The Arcadian, in her coarse woolen garments, scarcely suffers the regularity of her form to appear ; but her countenance is expressive of innocence and purity of mind. Chaste as daughters, the women of the Morea assume as wives even a character of austerity."

\* Norris' ed., vol. i., p. 197.

† Ibid.

The general opinion of ethnographers is that the Greeks are still, and have always been, physically, the noblest race on earth. Yet an exception must be noticed in the person of the celebrated Baron Larrey, who placed at the head of the human family the Semitic Arab. As quoted by Dr. Prichard, he said that "experience has proved to him that their intellectual perfectibility is proportional to the higher development of their physical organization, and that it is, *without doubt*, superior to the faculties of those nations who inhabit the northern regions of the globe, meaning the Europeans." Baron Larrey is most explicit and profuse on the subject. According to him, in other parts of the skeleton besides the skull, the Semitic Arabs display a proportionate superiority in organic perfection to other races of men ; and after detailed remarks on the convolutions of their brain, on their whole nervous system, on the heart and the arteries, on their external senses, and on their muscular system, he concludes that "this physical perfectibility is very far from being equaled by the mixed nations of any part of Africa and of America, and especially by the northern nations of Europe ; and upon the whole, I am convinced," he says, "that the cradle of the human family is to be found in the country of this race." Larrey did not believe, evidently, that the human race began in degradation.

But with this exception, which deserves certainly a respectful attention, on account of the great ethnical knowledge and superior anatomical and physiological attainments of the writer, ethnographers in general agree in placing the Hellenes at the head of all nations with respect to the physical organization and development.

But in the object we propose to ourselves we must pay less attention to physical than to moral superiority ; and there is no doubt that if the Hellenes have preserved the first intact, the same cannot be said of the second ; and this we must particularly examine, since it is the moral nature of a people which makes it incline to accept such a religion as Christianity, or reject it. In *Gentilism* this constant moral degeneracy of the Greeks from the Pelasgic period to the advent of our Lord is proved in detail, and only a word can be said in this place. Their polytheism had certainly run to extremes, and fallen into "individualism." Numerous extracts of the most learned Fathers of the Church, chiefly of Clement of Alexandria, prove them to have been in his time most superstitious and degraded in their religious ideas. Their abnormal and gross sensuality,

going back in point of time as far up as the brilliant epoch of Pericles, had long before the coming of our Lord incapacitated them for all great moral and even patriotic effort. Consequently nothing is so remarkable, yet so natural, in their national existence, as the energy they displayed to repel the attack of the Persians from the East, and their passive, or rather submissive, attitude to receive later on the yoke of the Romans from the West.

When the Cæsars appeared there was no more among the Greeks any national cohesion of any sort. They were split in a thousand fragments, and succumbed gradually without almost any of their tribes helping each other. This disintegration had been chiefly brought about by religious individualism ; for, after all, they owed everything they had to their religion.

It was their peculiar polytheism which had given them their literature, their philosophy, and the fine arts by which they yet ruled the world. All their great thinkers, writers, poets, artists, had found in the Hellenic mythology the source of their peculiar inspiration, and chiefly the love of the beautiful. Yet it must be remarked that for them the beautiful, the ideal, kept nearly all the time a material character, precisely on account of its polytheistic origin, and very seldom rose to what we justly call the spiritual type. If Phidias gave once to his Jove and to his Athenè the marks of a grandeur superior to sense, it was an exception ; and whatever may have been the origin of his sudden inspiration, either a spark of his native genius, or some line of Homer, as many imagine in our day, the noble gift did not create a school, but remained a unit in Grecian art, which always, before and after, idealized sensible ideas in sensible forms.

This, however, had received such an impress of earthly beauty, that the Hellenic mind was, as it were, imbued with an æsthetic aroma which preserved it a long time from excessive corruption ; and at the epoch now under consideration, they were yet at the head of the world in literature, philosophy, and art. Although they had no more poets like Sophocles and Pindar ; no historians like Herodotus and Thucydides ; no artists like Phidias and Polygnotus, they were still the educators of the Romans. It was yet to Athens that the proud patricians of Italy went to study philosophy and oratory ; it was yet to Greek elocutionists and grammarians that the great families of Rome confided the education of their children ; it was still the Greek architects, sculptors, and painters that embellished

Rome and other great Italian cities. The literature and arts of Hellas had shed such a brilliant and lasting luster on the nation that its splendor could still continue for centuries. Its military glory was gone forever, and we do not read anywhere that Greeks—not even Spartans—formed part of the armies of Rome under the Cæsars. Gauls and Germans were beginning to be enlisted, and to march, together with Italians, under the legions' eagles ; the Macedonian phalanx, this last show of Hellenic military spirit, had been forever disbanded, and never appeared, that we know, on the Rhine or along the banks of the Danube. But Rome could not do without the artists and the orators of Greece. Under the first Cæsars, chiefly, the language of Rome was half-Greek. Augustus could not write to a friend without interlarding his Latin phrases with Hellenic quotations. It may be said that Greece had morally conquered Rome by her religion and literature ; it was all that was left her, but it seemed yet a proud legacy.

But did not philosophy undermine their polytheism and thus prepare them for Christianity ? It did nothing of the kind, and rather strengthened their natural resistance to the new worship. All admit that philosophy and religion were for the Hellenes two fields absolutely distinct. The philosopher never abjured his creed and the superstitions of his country by the most rash speculations ; and the priesthood had no power to censure or repress the highest flights of a speculative philosophy. If Socrates suffered death for his opinions, he was accused by dramatists and sophists, not by any of those to whose care religion was intrusted ; and he disclaimed, himself, in his defense, any intention of undermining the belief of young Athenians. The abstract systems of Greek thinkers were rather favorable to polytheism than otherwise, by giving shape to speculations on cosmogony, in which the gods of mythology played an inferior and distinct part, perfectly well adapted to their nature, according to public opinion. These anthropomorphist divinities were never imagined to have created the world and to be all-powerful ; they only symbolized the ever-acting forces of nature, and thus took naturally their place in the ordinary systems of philosophy. It is well known that the Alexandrian eclecticism particularly imposed on itself the special task of giving a rational basis to the popular religion. Philosophy, therefore, for the Greeks, was pagan, and cannot be said to have prepared the way for the Christian religion, except so far as keeping alive some ancient and true traditions, derived from the primitive and

patriarchal revelation. In this sense only some Greek Fathers of the Church called the Greek philosophy a kind of "*præparatio evangelica*."

We can consequently assert that polytheism was everything for the Greeks ; and take away their mythology, and everything for them was gone. What human prospect could there be, that the Hellenes would thus throw away the splendid bauble they had yet in their hands, for a gloomy religion that brought them only the cross ? The reflection is important and true, and must be insisted upon. To adopt a new creed, brought to them by despised Jews, they had first to give up everything which gave them yet a national appearance, and discard forever, as infected with superstition and *devilism*, all the beautiful and attractive delusions which had rocked in its cradle every Grecian child in the last eight centuries. Both the patriot and the man, therefore, could not but be shocked at the very idea. Any one bearing on his face the noble features of the Hellenic type, uttering from his lips the harmonious Ionian dialect, and endowed with the precious gifts of his native civilization, could proudly say that if his nation was gone politically, it still ruled the world by everything which ennobles a race ; but, alas ! all this centered in Greek polytheism. Every patriotic feeling must, therefore, have been totally opposed to a change of religion. It was for them what is called in modern language suicidal.

But if this was the natural leaning of the nationalist, it was perhaps more emphatically the bent of the man, that is, of the individual. Hellenic nature was impregnated with the love of the beautiful as understood by them, with the passion for art, for poetry, for philosophical discussion ; and all this was certainly thoroughly pagan. Throw away polytheism, and all this had to vanish *instanter*. This is so true that from the moment they became Christians, they had to turn their back not only on their old cherished religion, but likewise on their art, poetry, and culture. It has not been remarked enough, and it is our duty to place the thought in a strong light : *The old Greek literature ends with the very moment of their conversion to Christianity.*

True, should we merely open the exhaustive treatises on the subject, published in our day, the works of R. W. Brown, K. O. Müller, William Mure, etc., a different idea might be entertained. After the Attic period, these writers enumerate the Alexandrian age, the Roman, and finally the Byzantine epochs, and each of them fur-

nishes a respectable list of authors. But this, we say, lies really outside of what can be properly understood by Greek literature. During the Alexandrian period the Greek language has left Greece and taken refuge in Africa, and the Egyptian Ptolemies are its patrons. During the Roman sway, the authors writing in Greek choose for their theme the history of Rome, or general history, as Polybius, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Diodorus Siculus. Most of these authors were born and lived far from Greece ; Pontus, Caria, Sicily, etc., were their native countries. The same must be said of the Byzantine period, when Christian writers began to appear. Certainly, whenever the Hellenes of those times reflected on the literary glory of their country, their mind naturally reverted to the previous periods of time, particularly to the age of Pericles, and to the numerous writers who followed in the footsteps of those noble writers ; and we insist on repeating that to embrace the Christian religion was, for them, to turn their back on this glorious past, and discard forever what remained yet to them the most substantial and attractive portion of their national existence—the literature of three or four centuries back. It is consequently substantially true that the old Greek literature ends with the very moment of their conversion to Christianity.

A new period, undoubtedly, of mental activity began for them at this very instant, as brilliant as the first, and far superior in substance. The patristic scholarship was to replace the pagan ; and the number, depth, and solidity of their Christian writers was to leave far back in the shade their former great men. John Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, Athanasius, Cyril, a host of others, were to throw forever over the dogmas and morality of the new religion the height of wisdom and the halo of sanctity. A new philosophy was then to start into life, sure of holding the truth, and no more hesitating in her utterances ; a new poetry in prose was to supersede that of Homer and Euripides, whose songs were to celebrate the union of Heaven and Earth, the real incarnation of God in our humanity, the regeneration of mankind, and the sure hope of a true immortality. Where can we find, in the most brilliant pages of the old polytheistic poets, such an admirable and enticing fancy as delights us in reading the sublime conceptions of Chrysostom, of Gregory, and of Basil ?

But who could have foreseen it when Greece began to run to the embrace of Christ ? when, for instance, Justin Martyr commenced by

his simple recitals the long list of Christian Greek writers? This hope could not enter into the imagination of the most sanguine among the new converts. They knew perfectly well that by becoming Christians they were losing all the advantages accruing to them from their past; none of them could foresee the future glories of the Church to whose foundations they were furnishing the first course of stones.

Yet, as the following pages of these volumes shall disclose, the Hellenes really ran to the embrace of the Saviour, and it was with a genuine enthusiasm that they renounced their enticing idolatry to clasp in their arms—what?—the cross of Christ. St. Paul has expressed it with the most perfect accuracy by stating that in the eyes of the world this was an *act of folly*. We shall have occasion to return to this thought.

We thus become convinced that neither the nobleness of their race, nor their philosophy, nor anything connected with national or individual feeling, could bring the Hellenes to the Christian creed; but everything of this kind, on the contrary, acted powerfully counter to it.

So far the Hellenic race has been considered as a unit; and it has been argued as to its leanings and natural disposition. But that part of the world confronting the Church at her birth, which at the time was called Grecian, did not all belong to that primitive and refined stock; but embraced, in fact, many branches of the human family having nothing in common with the Hellenes but the language; and this peculiarity of the case rendered certainly more difficult the admission among them of such a religion as Christianity was. The Greek world comprised, at that epoch, the whole eastern part of the Roman Empire; and as the beautiful language of Attica and Ionia gradually spread farther and farther east, north, and south, the north of Africa, the whole of Asia Minor, the gloomy shores of the Black Sea, even as far as the boreal regions, so despondingly depicted by the unfortunate Ovid, formed then the Hellenic world to which the message of Christ was to be offered at the very origin of the new religion.

To speak first of that delightful peninsula of anterior Asia which is now gasping out its last breath, in the squalor of poverty, the devastations of war, and the pangs of hunger, under the savage grasp of the tax-gatherers of the Turkish Sultan, how many different tribes existed there from the beginning, and continued to prosper

materially in Asia Minor? They were then nearly all speaking Greek, often in addition to their own native tongue; but the former blood of Phrygians, of Lydians, of Carians, etc., ran yet in the veins of most of them. A few words of Strabo, who had just at that time visited the country with a view to describing those tribes, will not be devoid of interest, and are certainly most appropriate to the subject.

A large portion of the eastern side of the peninsula, called then Cappadocia and Pontus, is naturally excluded from the actual inquiry, as it has already come under review. The same may be said of the western border along the *Ægean* Sea, inhabited during many centuries by *Æolian* and *Ionian* tribes from Greece, and consequently altogether Hellenic. But in the center of the country, and north along the *Euxine*, and south along the *Mediterranean*, how many tribes of every race, perhaps, continued to flourish down to the advent of our Lord. The narrative of Strabo is generally meager in ethnical details, yet we cannot but cull some of his statements.

There are, first, the Galatians, bordering on Cappadocia, whom St. Paul himself evangelized. The Greek geographer says of them: "There were three nations of them—the Trocmi, the Tolistobogii, and the Tectosages—that spoke the same language, and in no respect differed from each other. Each of them was divided into four portions called tetrarchies, and had its own tetrarch, its own judge, and one superintendent of the army, all of whom were under the control of the tetrarch. . . . The Council of the twelve tetrarchs consisted of three hundred persons, who assembled at a place called the Drynemetum. . . . Such anciently was the political constitution of Galatia; but in our time," says Strabo, "the government was in the hands of three chiefs, then of two, and at last it was administered by Dejotarus, who was succeeded by Amyntas."

It is universally known that the Galatians were Celts from the *Gallia Narbonnensis*, and they preserved in Asia Minor their civil institutions and their language. It was, therefore, even in Strabo's time, altogether a Celtic country. Paphlagonia, just north of the last-mentioned territory, and extending along the southern shore of the *Euxine*, is mentioned in Homer, together with the Heneti, its former inhabitants. "The account most generally received," says Strabo, "is that the Heneti were the most considerable tribe of the Paphlagonians; . . . that a large body of this people took

part in the Trojan war ; that when they had lost their leader they passed over to Thrace after the capture of Troy ; and in the course of their wanderings arrived at the present Henetic territory,” that is, Venetia, in Italy. In the time of Strabo there were no more Heneti in Asia Minor, and he merely remarks that “this tract—of Paphlagonia—although small in extent, was governed a little before our time, by several princes, but their race is extinct ; at present it is in possession of the Romans.”

In Phrygia and Mysia (this last country bordering on the Troad), the intermixture of races, and consequently the ethnical intricacy, was such in the time of the Greek geographer that he writes : “The confusion which has always existed among the nations in this district, and also the fertility of the country within the Halys, particularly near the sea, have contributed to the invention of fables (with respect to migration of races). The richness of this region provoked attacks from various quarters, and at all times from the opposite coast ; and the neighboring people contended with one another for the possession of it. Inroads took place chiefly about the period of the Trojan war, and constantly afterwards, barbarians as well as Greeks showing an eagerness to get possession of the territory of other nations.” A few pages further on, the celebrated geographer explains his meaning yet more pointedly : “After the Trojan times the migrations, of Greeks and of Treres, the inroads of Cimmerians and Lydians, afterwards of Persians and Macedonians, and lastly of Galatians, threw everything into confusion. An obscurity arose, not from these changes only, but from the disagreement between authors in the narrative of the same events, and in the description of the same persons.”

Further quotations would bring yet more vividly before our eyes the social intricacy so general all over Asia Minor at the time of Christ ; they are, we think, unnecessary, although not a word has been said of Lydia, Caria, Pisidia, Lycaonia, etc.

Yet it is in the midst of this large territory, swarming with old or new nations, that had come either from the neighborhood or from great distances, all jarring with each other, and differing in language, habits, religion, everything which might affect their social or civil condition, that St. Paul appeared suddenly, found hearers and admirers, obtained disciples and a large following, founded churches and ordained bishops, and did it so thoroughly that not long after the whole country was Christian. The phenomenon shall be better

described later on ; but it must be at least noticed briefly in this place.

Besides Asia Minor, Thrace, on the European side of the *Ægean* Sea and the Propontis, north of Macedonia, formed another part of the Hellenic world, although never included in Greece proper. It had been the chief seat of the Pelasgians ; and the noblest traditions of former times had originated from that country, and spread over the south through the instrumentality of Orpheus and his school. But owing to the natural drifting of nations toward degeneracy, which was certainly the great historical law in the ancient world, Thrace had become, at the coming of our Lord, a barbarous country, worthy, in the opinion of the Romans, only to furnish for their inhuman games a celebrated class of ferocious gladiators. Yet, it was still at that epoch a congeries of ancient nations, full of vigor, and destined to form a glorious branch of the Christian Church : it is sufficient to say that Byzantium, which became Constantinople, belonged to it.

Unfortunately the world has lost the entire description Strabo had made of it ; a few fragments only remain of the end of his Seventh Book, where he described the Thracians. What can be gleaned in those scanty remains, consists of a few observations like the following : “The whole of Thrace is composed of twenty-two nations. Although greatly exhausted, it is capable of equipping fifteen thousand cavalry, and twenty thousand infantry. . . . Along the Hebrus dwell the Corpili, the Brenæ still higher up, and lastly the Bessi, for the Hebrus is navigable up to this point. All these nations are addicted to plunder, particularly the Bessi, who border upon the Odrisæ and Sapæi.” The other statements of Strabo consist in mere geographical details, having no bearing on ethnology. But from the few words we have quoted it is evident that if the Thracians did not offer such a complicated intricacy of races as have been just witnessed in Asia Minor, yet this country presented features very different from Greece, and must have rendered the spread of the new religion among them much more difficult and slow, owing to their semi-barbarous manners and customs.

It would be much worse yet should we extend our survey over the numerous tribes living on the northern shore of the Euxine, where Greek colonies had settled long before, but which remained completely without culture, mixed up as they were with the Scythians of the Dnieper and the Volga. Tartary was already there in the

heart of Europe, and this is not the place to speak of this part of the world, as Greek influence ended abruptly on the first limits of these regions.

#### *6. Nations North and South not mentioned so far.*

Since, however, we are considering the world at the time of Christ, a word at least must be said of those nations north or south, which at first did not fall, even remotely, under the influence of the Church, or in course of time proved to be the greatest temporary obstacle to her universal spread. The first check received by the Church in her progressing career, came in the north from the Goths and Germans, in the south from the Saracens. Both were originally beyond the limits which have so far occupied our attention, since the enumeration of different nations has just been arrested, north by the Danube and the Don ; and toward the south, our previous ethnical studies in this chapter scarcely included Arabia, whence the Saracens came. Has not our avowed object been signally defeated by thus early restricting, within almost narrow limits, what has been all along proclaimed to be in its nature of a universal character ? We think it has not, for this simple reason : At the time of the first proclamation of Christianity, the Goths, and in general the German and Scandinavian nations, had not yet been reached by civilization ; and Christianity addressed itself first to the civilized world, before undertaking the much more difficult and long task of influencing barbarism. The mandate the apostles had received was in truth of a universal nature : "Go, teach all nations." But the apostles were men, and their own divine Master, during his life, did not show himself exteriorly as God, but appeared as a simple man, and permitted all exterior influences to act upon his personality, as if he had been subject to them. All along in the history of the Christian Church the same limitation of power is discernible ; and the reason of it is that the admission of the claim to be heard on the part of the messengers of God is left to the free will of man, in order that faith should be meritorious. But what the first apostles could not do during their short career would be left to their successors ; and thus the prophecies concerning Catholicity would have all the future ages for their perfect accomplishment. The first outburst of zeal and its stupendous effect as a moral victory over the world, can well enough satisfy the most captious and fault-

finding inquirer ; and to pretend that the original incompleteness of the work argues a want of fulfillment in the promises is to suppose that those predictions were to be accomplished all at once, when no promise of the kind is ever found in the Old or New Testament.

But to come to the northern nations, beginning by the Goths and Germans, which we have left in the obscurity of their forests and morasses, as if the light of the Gospel was never intended for them, it can be said : At the time of Christ, they had not yet come to play a part on the stage of human history ; they could scarcely be called human beings, so degraded they were, so fiercely addicted to the most brutal passions. For the description of the Germans as sketched by Tacitus, must be admitted to be a mere romance, penned purposely by the great writer as a burning satire against his deeply-corrupted fellow-Romans. The time would soon come when, after the first outbreak of their furious savagery, after a period of frightful excesses and destruction, Europe having been overrun and well-nigh ruined by them, they would finally find themselves front to front with the meek messengers of Christ, armed only with the cross, and intent only on blessing and saving ; they would at last be converted into human beings, and become worthy by baptism of the name of Christians. To them, henceforth, would be given the hegemony of Europe and of the world, and by the prodigious change effected in them by their conversion they would become the most eloquent proof that in Christ Jesus there are no Greeks nor barbarians, no Gentiles nor Jews.

The case of the Saracens is somewhat different ; it requires, likely, an explanation. The Semitic Arabs of the north of the peninsula had received the call from the outset ; they were the first St. Paul evangelized :\* it is certain that very early Christianity penetrated extensively among the Arabian Semites. Even the southern part of the country had not remained outside of its early influence.

It is known that Mahomet shows an extensive acquaintance with both Judaism and Christianity in his Koran. But the fanaticism of the impostor, growing wild in those wild regions, and the fire he came to kindle spreading rapidly by the aid of the sword, turned out to be the greatest obstacle the religion of Christ ever met in her peaceful conquest of the world. This obstacle, however, could not but be temporary ; and with the visible decline and rapidly coming

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\* Gal. i. 17.

fall of the Turkish power in our day, the hope naturally arises that many nations of Africa and Asia will furnish at least numerous worshipers of Christ, as Christian proselytism is no more forbidden among many Mahometan tribes. These considerations, however, do not belong to the actual branch of the subject. All that can be insisted upon is that apostolic men were sent to the Eastern countries long before Mahometanism arose, have continued ever since to exert their efforts, uselessly, it is true, for the conversion of Mussulmans, and will be found ready in great number when the hour comes for the gathering in of those deluded nations. The waves of Catholicity, starting from Jerusalem, spread at the very outset over a great portion of the three known continents, and thus the old prophecies were to a great extent fulfilled, even long before their accomplishment was perfect, and the cross was planted over the whole globe.

In the main subject which at this moment claims our attention, even the barbarous tribes of Northern Europe, as well as the wild population of the east and south, are thus naturally included ; and consequently nothing is abstracted or taken away from the universality which we all along proclaim.\*

#### 7. *Nations of the Western Roman World.*

There remains to be examined, in the West, the Roman power, including within its limits numerous races of men, inhabiting not

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\* Muchleisen Arnold, in his *Islam*, inquires how it is that the Arabs, in contradistinction to other nations bordering on the Roman Empire, rejected in great part Christianity? He thinks this fact can be easily explained by a succession of heresiarchs who swarmed on the confines of Arabia from the apostolic times down to the seventh century. He enumerates Cerinthus, Ebion, Carpocrates, Peter of Samosata, and Beryllus of Bostra, whom he justly calls the "Precursors of Mahomet." As to the Koran, the author thinks that such a farrago of doctrine and nonsense was just suited to the people to whom it was addressed. Mahomet had artfully combined in it the old Judaism of the Ismaillians and the corrupt Christianity of the apocryphal gospels, several of which announced openly a future prophet.

This thesis, as developed in the Introduction to *Islam*, is certainly very plausible, if not true. But to form a perfectly just estimate of it, the principle must be insisted upon, that in the spread of Christianity, *natural aptitudes*, and the various circumstances which go to form what is called *natural explanations*, are never sufficient, because there is at all times a divine plan which alone must be believed to be paramount. Besides, it is not true that Arabia at first "rejected in great part Christianity." The contrary shall be proved.

only Italy, but Gaul, Spain, and the north of Western Africa. This was destined to be the permanent and central part of the dominion given by the Almighty to his universal Church, and requires on this account our particular attention.

Mr. Lecky, in his *History of European Morals*, endeavors to explain naturally the conversion of *Rome* to Christianity; but even should he have succeeded in convincing his readers of the soundness of his views—we will in due time take the liberty to indulge in some remarks on the subject—his natural explanation would not be sufficient, because of the contracted circle of his theory. The Western Roman world included a great deal more than the City of Rome.

Although “the mistress of the world,” as she was termed, held the proud position of “Head” and “Center” of the existing civilization, and was on this account taken possession of by the Prince of the Apostles, who made her his *See* forever; yet the whole extent of Italy, with the surrounding islands, the large expanse of Gaul, a conquest only of yesterday, the square, rich, and populous peninsula of Spain, with its numerous tribes, and finally, the extensive and fertile provinces of Northern Africa toward the west, embraced a great deal more than the proud city of the seven hills. Mr. Lecky, therefore, would prove nothing, even if his considerations on the facility of converting Rome were just.

Italy, first, although the Latin language was spoken over the whole peninsula, was far from being homogeneous ethnologically. The southern third part of it was yet Hellenic, and was still justly called “Great Greece.” But in the midst of many Grecian cities, founded around and all over the country of the Bruttii, it is well known that a great number of semi-barbarous tribes existed, which have not yet disappeared in our day, and have constantly been the cause of political or social annoyance to the various governments that have succeeded each other in that part of Italy. They became Christian at a very early age, yet among them have always been found brigands, and lately revolutionists.

Nearer Rome even the numerous uncouth nations against which the city struggled during the four first centuries of her existence, had not been exterminated, and several of them had scarcely been tamed by all her exertions. Of one of them alone mention is made in history that it had been *altogether* destroyed; yet directly after this statement, it is only asserted that “their cities had dwindled into villages,” which certainly does not suppose a total annihilation; and

as this single example is well calculated to afford an exact idea of the state of Italy, even not far from Rome, at the time our Saviour appeared, it seems proper to give a few historical details on the subject. It is the nation of the Samnites, and the information is furnished by Strabo, an unexceptionable witness.

"At the present day," he says,\* "they have been almost entirely exterminated by various Roman generals, and last of all by Sulla, who was absolute master of the republic. After having by numerous battles put an end to the rebellion of the Italian cities, he remarked that the Samnites, almost without exception, remained still united, and had just dared to march upon Rome itself, with the evident intention of preserving their autonomy. He waited, therefore, for them, gave them battle under the walls, and as he had issued orders to make no prisoners, many of them were cut to pieces on the field, while the remainder, said to be about three or four thousand men, who threw down their arms, were led off to the *Villa Publica* in the *Campus Martius*, and there shut in, and kept close prisoners. Three days later soldiers were sent in, who massacred the whole ; and when Sulla drew up his proscription list, he did not rest satisfied until he had destroyed, or driven from Italy, every one who bore a Samnite name. To those who reproached him for this animosity, he replied that not a single Roman could rest in peace so long as any of the Samnites survived."

So late as Sulla, therefore, Italy was cut up into a great number of small nationalities, and one of them alone was extirpated in the social war ; the others had been subdued, indeed, by the Roman armies, and lived henceforth in peace, yet they all continued to preserve the leanings of their race, and Rome had extended over them only the uniformity of her administration.

If this was true of Italy, how much more was it true of Gaul, of Spain, of Britain, of Northern Africa. In the propagation of Christianity, the historians we have to trust for furnishing us the details of this great fact, speak in the West only the Latin tongue, and all the minute incidents they mention exhale a perfume of Roman civilization. In the East, beginning with St. Paul, all the progress of the new religion seems to rest on Hellenic culture ; and scarcely any intimation is given of the peculiarities of many races differing altogether from the Greeks. It looks as if Christianity had been

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\* Book v., c. iv., § 11.

confronted at its birth only by the two master elements of Europe, such as it then was ; and an indefinite number of smaller units, of which the great Hellenic and Roman integrations were composed, are altogether thrown in the shade, and considered as of no value in the immense revolution then accomplished. But it is a great mistake to imagine it was so in fact ; and to understand properly the whole process of the conversion of the world, a few words on the well-known course of action adopted by the first apostles of Christ are of extreme importance, as they will give us a just idea of the work they had undertaken.

No ethnical consideration, certainly, entered into their mind when they proclaimed the truths of the Gospel ; and they professed to make themselves "all to all," yet they soon perceived that the world was divided indeed beyond computation, and that this moral and social disruption was sadly in the way of their progress. According to the Acts of the Apostles they applied themselves first to the conversion of the Jews gathered together from all countries for the feast of Pentecost, and St. Peter brought to the new faith eight thousand of them in two days of preaching. But this astonishing success was soon arrested by the stubbornness of the nation, and after having preached in vain throughout Judea in the synagogues, where soon persecution awaited them, Peter and Paul found themselves together in the Grecian city of Antioch, where for the first time they met with Hellenic philosophy and Hellenic superstition. The first Gentile had already been converted by Peter, in the person of the Roman centurion Cornelius, but in the great capital of Syria, it was not an isolated individual or a single family that was brought to Christ, but a whole church that was founded.

It has been, however, justly remarked that even after this first success in the Gentile world, the apostles did not altogether give up the attempt of converting the Jews ; and St. Paul in particular, who has been represented by the Tübingen school of "theology" as opposed to Peter in this—that "the *Pauline party* leant toward Gentilism, whilst the *Petrine* was altogether Jewish,"—St. Paul is everywhere portrayed in the Acts as preaching in the synagogues throughout Asia Minor and Greece, and filling the churches he founded with Jewish converts as well as with Syrian and Greek disciples. He seems even, as the authors of the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* remark, to have at first succeeded mostly among the Jewish proselytes, then very numerous in Greece and Italy, chiefly at Rome,

as it has been ascertained lately by the celebrated De Rossi in his *Roma Sotterranea*. Greeks, Romans, Syrians, and Egyptians, who had previously adopted the Mosaic religion after having abandoned their original polytheism, seem to have been the best disposed among the hearers of St. Paul, and to have formed the bulk of the new churches he everywhere founded.

St. Paul was not the only one of the apostles who thus introduced himself into the heart of the Gentile world by the conversion of Jewish proselytes. The Rev. James Martineau has graphically described, in spite of himself, in a paper published in *Old and New*, for January, 1875, the work of Peter in the same field. His object is far from meeting our approval, since he takes an occasion from it to pronounce against the genuineness of the book of St. Luke on the Acts of the Apostles. But his puny effort in this direction is perfectly harmless. These are his words: In the book of Acts "Peter appears emphatically as the first Gentile advocate and apostle. Sentiments of unqualified universalism flow from his lips; and, while Paul is still in the Synagogue, he has already been baptizing Romans; and he alone admits them on the avowed principle that they are as near and dear to God as he; while the 'man of Tarsus' turns to them only of necessity, when the priority of Israel has come to nought. It is Peter to whom the call of the Gentiles is revealed, and who learned from it that he was 'to call no man common or unclean;' who finds that the Holy Spirit falls as graciously on the household of Cornelius as on the company at Pentecost; who pleads in the Church convention, against laying on any believer the legal 'yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear,' on the ground that God, who knoweth the hearts, hath put no difference between Israelite and alien, but gives the witness of his grace to both."

No better description could be given of the various facts related by St. Luke; and if they are altogether adverse to the Tübingen theory of the celebrated "Petrine and Pauline parties," so much the worse for the theory, we say.

This seems to be the simple process by which the apostles soon found themselves front to front with the numerous nationalities of Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. In previous ages the Jews do not appear to have been over-zealous in the propagation of their religion among the pagans, although they always received them willingly when they came to them; but in the century which pre-

ceded the birth of Christ, their disposition in this respect was altogether changed, and the word of the Saviour in acknowledgment of it is well known. The phenomenon was universal, and as extensive as the spread of the Hebrews out of Palestine. But it was chiefly remarkable in Egypt and in Italy ; Alexandria was fast becoming a Jewish city, and in Rome numerous conversions to the Mosaic worship were taking place among all classes, not excepting the patrician. It seems to have been a providential fact, and looks as if it was designed to help the spread of the Christian religion. We must not believe, however, that it was all-sufficient, and that all obstacles were thus easily overcome, and the conversion of the world become easy ; proofs to the contrary will soon multiply. It was, besides, only a temporary fact, which did not last long, and imparted just a slight impulse to the original propagation of the faith. But it must not be entirely passed over in the enumeration of all the moral forces, acting simultaneously, but in various and sometimes opposite directions, in the great social revolution we now contemplate in all its details.

To elucidate appropriately the position of the first apostles when they undertook the fulfillment of their heavenly mission, we must enter into some particulars with respect to the various fields in which they had to labor. At Antioch and Corinth, for instance, St. Paul found himself in a very different situation from that among the Phrygians, the Galatians, and the Ephesians. Corinth and Antioch were altogether Greek cities ; Phrygia and Galatia were mostly inhabited by native wild tribes ; and at Ephesus, the greatest emporium of Asia Minor, men of all nations, but chiefly from the interior of the peninsula, were met with in great numbers. The apostle preached at first, almost invariably, in Jewish synagogues ; but he was soon, almost invariably likewise, unable to continue, owing to the universal opposition of the Jews to his preaching. Then he fell back on the proselytes, who, being born in Gentilism, had yet many relatives among pagans, and naturally introduced St. Paul into the idolatrous world. This process is inferred from the simple narrative of St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. But the reader can easily imagine how different must have been the *modus agendi* adopted by the apostle in Greek cities, as Antioch and Corinth, and in such wild countries as were, at the time, according to Strabo, Lycaonia, Phrygia, Galatia, and Cappadocia. That he knew how to adapt himself to so many diverse situations can be easily inferred from his speech before the Athenian Areopagus. He preached to

all, it is true, only one thing—Jesus and him crucified—but he always presented that great truth in terms best calculated to gain over those he addressed at the time.

This short digression was required to give a correct idea of the diversified field which offered itself to the apostles, and of the difficulties they must have encountered. This will come out better in resuming the narrative.

A word has been said of the diversity of races in Italy, even in the neighborhood of Rome, and this word must suffice; but more is required with respect to Spain, Gaul, and the African provinces of Mauritania and Numidia. Spain had so far been under the yoke of Rome during two or three centuries. But as it is well known, Rome did not destroy the tribes she conquered; she left them as they were, obliging them only to keep at peace and to bow under the Roman administration. It is certain that at the first preaching of the Gospel, the Iberian peninsula swarmed yet with the numerous nationalities encountered long previously by the first generals from Rome who set their foot on Spanish soil. Ethnographers generally admit that at that time one half of the peninsula was Celtic; the other half must have contained numerous races of altogether different origin. One small fact yet subsisting will speak more eloquently on the subject than a long enumeration. The Basques are well known, have been studied with an eager curiosity during the last fifty years, and existed certainly at the time, only in much greater number and spread over a much more extensive territory. It is generally admitted that they do not belong to the family of Indo-European nations; their language and their manners have no affinity with any thing Aryan or Japhetic; they have resisted successfully the Carthaginian, Roman, Vandal, Saracen, French, and Spanish pressure; they have kept their liberty and customs against all comers, and are to-day what they were two thousand years ago, except that they have been for the last fifteen hundred years, at least, firm Christians and loving sons of the Catholic Church. They dwell on both slopes of the Pyrenees, but in greater number on the south side; and no one has ever dared to say a word against them with respect to morality, uprightness, intelligence, thriftiness, and the love of liberty. They differ as much at present from the French in the north and from the Spaniard in the south, as they ever did, and they stand a most conspicuous example of the endurance of race characteristics, and of the permanence of ethnical peculiarities.

At the time of the first propagation of Christianity in Spain many other nationalities existed in the peninsula, which have been merged since in the actual population of the country ; but from the surviving Basques we may infer the kaleidoscopic view which the Iberian quadrilateral then presented, and the difficulty thus offered to the missionary.

In Gaul the same state of things obtained universally ; for it is certain that with the exception of the *Provincia Narbonensis* and the small territory of the *Massilienses*, the whole country was Celtic, and had scarcely been penetrated by Roman civilization. In the south even, in the midst of the colonies and *municipia* of Rome, and all around the Hellenic city of Massilia, the Celtic element had not been in the least destroyed, and it continued to exist in the midst of the tolerant and liberal civil institutions of the Head City of the world. A book has just appeared in France, most remarkable on account of the original researches of the author, and the startling conclusions which he draws from them. It is the *Histoire des institutions politiques de l'ancienne France*, by M. Fustel de Coulanges, in which he proves that the generally received opinion, which makes of the modern people in that country a mixture of Gallic, Roman, and Germanic elements, is not sustained by many facts now ascertained. According to him—and the authorities he quotes are convincing—the common belief that the Roman conquest of Gaul had flooded the country with armies of old legionary soldiers, and with swarms of patricians, followed by crowds of clients, is a pure imagination. In that sense there was no Roman conquest of Gaul. It is, he says, as auxiliaries, nay, as liberators, that the legions first penetrated into the country ; and as allies, as protectors, that they remained in it. The fact is well known that deputies of the different Gallic states came as suppliants to J. Cæsar, threw themselves at his feet, and with tears in their eyes, conjured him not to abandon them to the sword of the Helvetii and the Germans. Later on, it is true, the fickle Gauls repented this hasty step, and there was a universal rebellion against Rome through the country. The chief they had universally chosen, Vercingetorix, fought valiantly, but was conquered, and the whole of Gaul became a Roman province ; yet the native population was not even decimated ; a few strangers came from Italy, and took in their hands the administration of the various cities. The Gauls kept their religion, their language, and their customs, except that prominent one of quarreling among themselves,

and waging a constant war of clan against clan, which henceforth Rome forbid them.

The author concludes from a large number of facts that "during all the time of the Roman domination the Gallic race remained preponderant in the country, and the infiltration of foreign blood was scarcely appreciable." M. de Coulanges goes still much further, and gives many reasons for believing that even the subsequent Germanic invasions of Gaul, so much more bloody and thorough than the Roman, did not make any sensible change in the result; so that, according to him, the French of to-day are in the main Gallic in all their characteristics. But we need not, for our present purpose, enter into this last consideration. It suffices that when Christianity was first preached in the country, Gaul was altogether Celtic; and we will add that the same was perfectly true of Great Britain also.

A word remains to be said of Northern Africa, in the West. By the conquest of Carthage Rome had become mistress of this vast country, but left entirely undisturbed the native population. They were called Mauri; hence the name of Mauritania. For a long time ethnographers were far from agreeing on their origin, and they mostly referred them to a number of heterogeneous races. More exact researches made in Africa since the conquest of Algeria by the French, have altogether altered that opinion; and from the language of the numerous tribes still dwelling in the country, the strange conclusion seems likely to become finally the correct one, that one single race existed originally from the confines of Egypt in the east, to the Atlantic in the west, and even as far as the group of the Canary Islands. To use the words of Dr. James C. Prichard in his *Natural History of Man*:\* "On African ethnology a new light has been thrown by the acute and penetrating researches of Mr. F. W. Newman, who has been the first to demonstrate what many former writers have merely conjectured, that the language of the great and widely-spread family of nations who extend over the whole of Africa, from Mount Atlas, of which they are the original inhabitants, to the borders of Egypt and Abyssinia, is an ancient and distinct branch of the Syro-Arabian or Semitic group,—a coeval sister-language of the ancient Aramaean, the Hebrew, and the primitive Arabian."

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\* Book ii., ch. x.

This extensive race is now called the Berber, and there is no doubt that the people called by the Romans *Mauri*, belonged to it. When Christianity spread in the country Rome was mistress of it ; yet the Moors formed the bulk of the population, and the Carthaginians continued also to dwell in great numbers in many cities and harbors. That the Roman inhabitants were not the only ones to embrace the new religion, is proved by many documents, which our limits do not allow us even to refer to. A great number of Moors certainly remained pagans, and at the time of the Vandalic invasion, were ardent persecutors of the Catholics, and seconded to the best of their ability the fury of the new masters of Africa. Yet a great number of them had early embraced the religion of Christ, as will be abundantly proved in the following chapters.

We have thus passed in review the immense field over which Christianity spread with such an astonishing rapidity: and it is proper to condense the whole in a few reflections, calculated to afford an exact idea of the phenomenon we will have to contemplate, and of the insuperable difficulties it would certainly have met with if it had not been a divine work, designed in heaven, and carried out by human agency, no doubt, but under the influence of a supernatural power ; so that what we call the Catholicity of the Church from the very beginning, could not but be the work of God.

Before entering, however, on those general considerations, a word is required to fulfill a previous promise, on the pretended facility with which the city of Rome, in particular, could be converted to Christianity. Mr. Lecky, the reader knows, explains with the greatest plausibility this process, so natural and so simple in his eyes. In his opinion the capital of the civilized universe was ripe for it ; and it seems, after perusing his pages, as if the Romans themselves could have invented the religion of Christ, had it not been brought to them from Judea. It is useless to attempt refuting these assertions severally. The non-Christian reader would scarcely understand a refutation whose plausibility could not be greater than that of the adverse opinion. *A priori* reasonings of that sort leave always loopholes through which sophistry can pass unperceived. Yet it is certain that when the test of actuality cannot be applied, this *a priori* reasoning is the only thing which remains for the inquirer after truth. But then, unfortunately, truth remains, as it were, at the bottom of a well. It happened in particular, last century, on this very question. Gibbon, reasoning also *a priori*, proved to his

own satisfaction, and to that of many readers, that not only in the City of Rome, but in the whole universe, the conversion of mankind to Christianity was a purely natural process, scarcely superior in point of difficulty to the annual changes which take place every spring, and every autumn, in the world of fashion. People, however, at this time, do not, in general, find the same cogency in his reasons which was supposed to be the fact a hundred years ago.

But, for the mighty question under review, *a priori* reasonings are not the only ones which can be employed. They must entirely give way to matter-of-fact argumentations. Experience, in such topics as these, is far preferable to abstruse considerations ; and, fortunately for us, the conversion of Rome has happened experimentally. The question, therefore, must not be stated in the terms Mr. Lecky employs. We must not ask ourselves, Was the conversion to Christianity of such a city as Rome was, a difficult matter *in abstracto*, considering the bias, etc. of its inhabitants ? Were we obliged to accept such a subject of discussion we might fall into the hands of one of those sharp rhetoricians, who promised to their pupils that they would teach them how to prove that the Right was Wrong, and the Wrong Right. We would prefer not to expose ourselves to the horns of this dilemma. And it is very easy to avoid it, merely by reflecting that once Rome *was* converted ; and the only question admissible in the present case is this, Was Rome converted, in fact, easily, or not ?

And mind it well, in the present question, both disputants are not left to their wits, to invent, imagine, or magnify facts ; they are not reduced to the necessity of arguing from a few fragments of contemporary authors, whose meaning can be twisted to the most discordant purposes. They have as the *substratum* of their argumentation the vast City of the Dead in Rome, called the Catacombs, which just at this moment begins to be interpreted in the right fashion. This is, for the solution of the proposed question, exactly what the remains of Pompeii and Herculaneum are for giving to the modern student a right idea of the every-day life of their inhabitants, at the time of their burial under the lava and ashes of Vesuvius. The inquirer cannot be more deceived in one case than in the other.

Now, should you go to Cavaliere De Rossi, and ask him plainly what is the answer to the supposed question, as given by the immense area of the Catacombs in all their details ; should you tell him that you have not the time and the money required to go to Rome,

and attend to everything needed for the inquiry ; but that you rely on his own well-known honesty ; and are aware, besides, that he can better judge than you of the meaning concealed under the heaps of rubbish which now disfigure the great City of the Dead. What do you think he would tell you ? Merely this : That to pretend that the cross of Christ was planted on the Capitol without a bloody struggle, and the most dreadful conflict between the powers of light and darkness, is a supposition belied by every inch of ground contained in this vast subterranean and dark sepulchre ; that the annals of no other people on earth show so well as the Catacombs do, the complete success of a few unarmed men against the sway of an empire such as the world had never seen before ; and that when Constantine, at the end of the struggle, bowed to the cross, he confessed by so doing that Heaven had triumphed, and that Heaven alone could have triumphed against so many obstacles as were in the way. To say that the thing was easy for simple mortals ; that Peter, and Linus, and Clement, and Soter, and their successors, considered merely as men, were perfectly competent to struggle and succeed against such odds as were arrayed against them, is so preposterous an idea, that those who entertain it may as well be left in the quiet possession of their absurd folly. There is no time for entering into more details ; the further consideration of this question may as well be left to the future development of our mighty subject.

### 8. *Conclusions from the whole chapter.*

On coming down to those generalizations promised a moment ago, we will consider successively, 1st, the divisions of mankind then existing, which offered, at the very start, together with idolatry, an insurmountable obstacle. 2dly, the impossibility for a sane man, unless sure of a divine mission, of imagining that such a total change as this could be practicable at the time. 3dly, the thoroughness of the contemplated change. 4thly, the inadequateness of the means employed by the apostles, humanly speaking. 5thly, and finally, the absolute weakness of the various explanations given by those who see in Christianity only a human fact. This last branch of the subject may be delayed till a future chapter.

1. The details just given concerning the state of the nations among whom the new religion spread so fast, are sufficient to prove that the dismemberment dating from the Tower of Babel, and going

on afterward unceasingly, through the constant action of various causes, chiefly of polytheism and difference of races, had not yet been arrested in its disorganizing career, and could not be said to have been touched by the conquests of Rome and the universality of her empire. In the rapid sketch we had to be satisfied with, many forcible circumstances and allusions were forbidden us ; but we refer to *Gentilism*, which falls in precisely with the present purpose, and where the whole subject is, we may say, elucidated. The apostles had to bring back mankind to that unity of moral and religious thought which prevailed around the cradle of the human race ; but they found only *disjecta membra*, arid bones, dissevered and mixed up in an inextricable confusion. Can we imagine it was, humanly speaking, possible to succeed in such an attempt ? To convince us of the contrary we have only to look a moment at the ungrateful task. Whenever we read in the New Testament the utterances of St. Peter, of St. Paul, of any other apostle or minister of Christ, if they address the Jews, it is seen at once that they are familiar with the people to whom they speak. They often upbraid them as the prophets had done before ; they refer to their previous history ; they show them the infinite mercies of God toward their race, etc. ; their course of action is all natural, because they speak to their countrymen. When they appear before a Gentile audience, there is nothing of that familiarity and previous acquaintance, if we may use the expression ; they evidently address alien races. They have only to rehearse the few facts they have themselves witnessed of the life of Jesus, of his miracles, his death and resurrection, joined with the unreasonableness and sinfulness of idolatry ; and the reader himself is immediately struck with the utter impossibility, humanly speaking, of any favorable result coming from such unintelligible assertions—unintelligible, we mean, with respect to pagans, altogether unprepared for perceiving their bearing and consequences. Any one who is acquainted with the grossness of the thoughts of the Syrians, Phœnicians, and Mesopotamians of that epoch, as they are revealed to us by their mythology, their so-called religious rites, their domestic customs, and social habits, must be convinced of the absurdity of any attempt to attract their attention to Christian truth. Imagine the superstitious devotee of Astarte, of Mylitta, of the Moon-god, etc., hearing Peter speak of the future destruction of the world by fire, and Paul descant on the judgment after death ! To feel the cogency of the threats and promises of Christianity, the human soul

must be prepared by a sort of previous education, which those nations had never received. It will be seen shortly how more refined peoples had been somewhat prepared for it by philosophy, like the Greeks, how they could be really affected by such truths as these, and how far there was for any of them at the time a spreading dislike against idolatry—this will deserve, later on, a serious consideration—but we maintain that there was absolutely nothing of the kind in Western Asia, where the apostles preached during the ten or twelve first years of their ministry. The whole country was a hot-bed of the most revolting and degrading superstitions; and of so attractive a kind for sensual natures, that about that very period many of those monstrous errors were eagerly adopted in Egypt, and, as is abundantly known, in Rome itself. A word has already been said of Elagabalus and his conical-shaped god. And here, at the risk of interrupting for a moment the swift current of these thoughts, we cannot resist alluding to the stupendous fact that three centuries later all these superstitions had vanished in Syria, Phœnicia, and Mesopotamia; and the degrading worship which had existed in those countries from the time of Nimrod down, had disappeared forever. Let the positive philosophers of our day explain naturally this wonderful fact.

To produce any impression on these nations, a previous knowledge of their propensities, prejudices, opinions, and errors, was required, naturally speaking; and the apostles do not seem to have possessed it, to have acquired it, unless by a sudden divine illumination; nay, they do not appear, by what we know of their missionary efforts, to have even cared for it. And yet such a knowledge must have embraced the peculiarities of those various peoples, so different from each other, the Syrians requiring certainly a different treatment from the Mesopotamians, and both from the Phœnicians, etc. For the moral and social division which had existed among them during so many centuries, had not in the least been remedied, neither by the Greek domination of the Seleucidæ, nor by the very recent supremacy of Rome over them.

And let not the objection be raised that the apostles did nothing of the kind, and that they addressed themselves only to the Jews living in the country, or at most to the numerous proselytes who had previously been converted from polytheism. If the apostles spoke first to these, and seemed to confine their endeavors at the outset in that direction, they converted very few Jews, as St. Paul constantly

laments ; and they had certainly to address themselves to the natives, who undoubtedly filled the first Christian churches ; since, so soon after, paganism had totally disappeared from the whole country. A Syro-Phœnician woman had addressed herself to the Saviour, who rebuked her at first, because she did not belong to the children of God ; but this harsh dispensation had ceased, and the apostles were commanded to receive all people alike. How many Phœnicians and Syrians applied to be received among the disciples of Christ, we do not know ; but undoubtedly the number must have been very large, since innumerable churches appear soon after to flourish along the Phœnician coast, on the borders of the Orontes, and in the delightful country of Damascus ; and people must not fancy that those countries were then inhabited by Romans or Greeks only.

But we must hasten on in so extensive a subject. The social confusion existing in those countries, the diversity of races, of customs, of religion, which must have opposed such an obstacle to the mission of the apostles, was yet at the time more remarkable in Asia Minor than in Syria. In the previous sketch a very imperfect idea of it could be given. Yet, all over that vast country the new religion spread as fast as in Syria. St. Peter wrote his first epistle to "the converted strangers dispersed through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." So that not only the province of Asia, along the Ægean Sea, but also the interior of the country, was already covered with numerous churches a few years after the death of Christ. Details must be deferred ; the only thing which ought to attract our attention at this moment, is the difficulty of addressing, for the same object of conversion to Christianity, so many different tribes, some of which had scarcely been subjected totally by the Persians, had felt in a very limited degree the Hellenic yoke, and were at the time merely numbered among the subjects of Rome. The ethnical details previously given can scarcely be called satisfactory ; still, with the help of reflection, they show sufficiently the difficulty of uniting in the same belief and reducing to the same moral consciousness, men of so many divergent races, languages, and adaptabilities. Taking into account only natural means, and supposing the early evangelizers reduced to their human capacity, each of them could have justly boasted, as of a great success, if at the end of a long and well-spent life, he had reduced to the yoke of Christ a single village, nestled in some of the wild slopes of Mount Taurus, or along the ancient river Halys. To suppose the same success obtained

by one man over the whole of Western Asia is a gratuitous impossibility, when considering human means alone.

The same line of reasoning could very well be applied to the various countries enumerated in the previous sketch ; but it is unnecessary, and on this account is better omitted. A few pages back, however, a particular mention has been made of the Greeks, who appeared to be better prepared for Christian truth by philosophy, and among whom idolatry is believed by some to have been on the wane. These two considerations require some discussion ; and Rome can be as well included in it as Greece itself. The question then arises, Had really the moral and social disruption existing in general in pagan countries, diminished in Rome and Greece ? Did philosophy prepare the way for Christian truth ? Was idolatry less prevalent than it had been previously in those highly-civilized countries ? and thus, could Christianity be said to have come at the right moment for achieving, naturally, the success it obtained ? These various questions are evidently of extreme importance, and require an impartial and serious handling. The help really furnished by the universality of the Roman Empire will come later on for consideration.

First, it can be boldly stated in general, that the Hellenic countries were less homogeneous in point of doctrine and political cohesion than they had been previously ; and the Roman Empire, as it is called, had not in the least extenuated the difficulty arising from difference of race and moral division, among the nations subjected to its sway. In *Gentilism* it has been proved, by many considerations and texts, that at the epoch under consideration the Greek-speaking countries were hopelessly divided, and deprived of every kind of national autonomy. There was not more cohesion among all those tribes and cities than in a rope of sand. The process of disintegration, going on for several centuries, had finally arrived at what was called "individualism." This was true in doctrine, religion, as well as in the political status of the whole country.

Eusebius, it is true, had justly considered the Hellenic philosophy as a preparation to the Gospel, and the Alexandrian Fathers of the Church had adopted his opinion. Clement, particularly, had filled many of his pages with texts tending to show that the Greeks had "plagiarized," as he said, the Hebrew sacred writers. But all this was asserted of the philosophy prevalent several centuries before. Among the authorities quoted by Eusebius and Clement, not a word is given as coming from contemporary writers ; and invariably

the most forcible texts adduced are the farthest removed in point of time. Whenever the same learned apologists of the Hellenic philosophy and religion speak of what existed in their day, it is only to pour ridicule and contempt on both ; and the Grecian worship of their epoch, particularly, is always represented as the most despicable superstition and inconceivable absurdity.

The voyages of St. Paul, as we know them from the book of St. Luke, are a superabundant proof that the Greece of his time was not that of Plato, and that the traditions floating yet everywhere in the atmosphere of Hellas four or five centuries before his time, had been at last completely forgotten. The great apostle, it is true, appealed undoubtedly to the deep testimony of the human conscience, as he knew that “when the Gentiles, who have not the (Mosaic) law, do by nature those things that are of the law, they are a law to themselves ; and they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them, and their thoughts within themselves accusing them, or else defending them.”\* But we see him nowhere appealing to those traditions of a high and pure philosophy, such as Eusebius called later on a true “*præparatio evangelica*.” The only attempt of the kind we find in the New Testament is his reference to the altar erected at Athens to the “unknown God,” who, in the minds of the polished people of that city could not be of a higher nature than their Apollo or Athenè. As to the political and social state of the country through which the apostle traveled, we perceive each city forming a small community by itself ; all being under the power of Rome, and every village or town caring only for its immediate small concerns. The language, it is true, was common, or nearly so ; but that was the only token of homogeneity which we can perceive. There was no center which, being once occupied, could become the means of acting on a large circumference ; everything had to be done piecemeal ; and how, in such circumstances, the whole country could so soon be subjected to Christ, we confess that our reason cannot explain, except on the supposition of divine influence and power. Corinth’s authority was limited within its walls ; Sparta was a village never mentioned in the New Testament ; Athens itself had kept only the prestige of her Areopagus and her schools, but could scarcely boast of a political power reaching as far as the Piræus. The same must be said of

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\* Rom. xi. 14, 15.

every city through Greece and the adjacent islands. The Achæan league, the last attempt at a partial union, had long before ceased to exist ; and as there was no more any political center, the cross had to be planted in every village, in order, it might be said, to have conquered the whole country.

Had St. Paul appeared at Athens at the end of the Persian wars, when that proud city had the real hegemony of Greece ; had he then succeeded in converting its inhabitants to the new religion, it might have been, humanly speaking, easy to establish it in all the countries acknowledging the Athenian sway. But at the time he preached to them, if he had succeeded even in changing the whole city of Minerva and made a Christian temple of the Parthenon, the whole country outside of Athens would scarcely have been moved by such an example as this, and it would not certainly have been induced by any political consideration to follow it, and worship the cross.

Can the same be said of the western part of the Roman Empire ? Certainly, in our opinion. The conversion of the capital and of the Cæsars, alone, would have been a powerful human help for the work of evangelization. But, outside of this, the difficulty remained nearly as great as if there had been no Roman Empire at all. The proofs lately adduced of the permanence of old races and tribes, all over the Western world, and even not far from Rome itself, are sufficient to show that with an appearance of unity, division really continued to exist as at any other anterior epoch. The only advantage the universality of the Roman dominion offered to the evangelists, consisted in the facility of travel and in the common idioms of Greece and Italy ; but this advantage, such as it was, soon became powerfully neutralized by making a hundred times more deadly the fury of the persecuting power.

But it is said there was philosophy, chiefly the Stoic sect, which in fact arrested, in a great degree, the patrician corruption, before Christian morality could gain sufficient ground in Italy. M. de Champagny, a fervent Christian, has acknowledged that the moral progress so evident under the Antonines, was due mainly to the natural reaction of all noble minds against the depravity, as well as the atrocious despotism of the first Roman Cæsars ; and it was only in the dictates of a more virtuous philosophy that men found a counterpoise to the weight of degeneracy, so manifest under Tiberius, Claudius, Nero, and their compeers. Yes ; it seems that the Stoicians paved the way for the Christians who followed, and that the

epithet, *præparatio evangelica*, given by Eusebius to the tenets of Pythagoras and Plato, could as well be applied to the more modern tenets of the followers of Zeno. This appears to be now the general opinion.

We know that St. Paul placed very little reliance, to say the least, on a philosophy which he often characterized in rather harsh terms ; and as the Greeks prided themselves chiefly on their rationalistic investigations, he said, and repeated often, that the doctrine of Christ crucified was to them “folly”—*stultitia*. And so in the main it proved to be the universal fact. Philosophy brought to the Christian religion a few noble minds, worthy of the admiration of the following ages, the greatest, perhaps, among them being Justin Martyr, who continued to wear the philosopher’s cloak after he had become an ardent and humble follower of Christ. But, with the exception of some very rare cases of this kind, where can we see the advantage which Christianity derived from the multifarious schools which flourished precisely at the time of the preaching of the apostles ? The Epicureans were certainly the most numerous, and surely it was not among them that the preachers of the Gospel could naturally look for converts. It is well known that the great majority of the philosophical sects turned out to be the most deadly enemies of the new religion. This became chiefly evident in Alexandria, where, during the first ages of Christianity, the schools of profane learning were certainly more renowned than at Antioch, Athens, and Rome. We are aware that the Alexandrian Fathers of the Church, from the very beginning of the second century, were deeply versed in philosophical doctrines ; but they studied them chiefly to confute the enemies of the Church who, in that great city, were precisely the philosophers. Neo-Platonism, flourishing at the time, has been well scrutinized in our day, and no one can deny that it was one of the most insidious and powerful adversaries of the Christian religion. So much so, that out of hatred of it, its adepts came at last to advocate openly the most literal idolatry, by pretending to give it a rational basis.

In many cases the philosophers were ardent promoters of the fearful persecutions which raged from the time of Nero down to that of Diocletian. A detailed account of their opposition to Christianity would, in our opinion, conclusively prove that they were one of the most powerful obstacles to its spread. This new doctrine, which, at the very beginning, and during the apostleship of St. Paul, was to

them “folly”—*stultitia*,—became in course of time *odious* in their sight; and it was the very word used by Tacitus, one of the best among the Stoicians, when he said that the Christians were convicted “*odii generis humani*.”

The great writer of the *Annals* was himself a hater of Christianity; yet he was one of the most distinguished among the disciples of Zeno. The glaring prejudices that he entertained against the new religion, were clearly those of his sect; and we are yet to know who was the Stoician who openly embraced Christianity, and died for it. Seneca has been named; but it has been proved that it is a delusion. Pride often put in their hand a dagger to open their own veins, and commit suicide after the example of Zeno their chief, and of Cato their idol; but precisely on this account they would have shuddered with indignation at the very idea of the “humility” required to offer their limbs to the “rack,” or to be devoured by wild beasts in the amphitheater, as disciples of a crucified God-man.

It is indeed undeniable—and it is all probably M. de Champagny wished to say—that the slow but sure working of Christianity among the people of Rome—among the great as among the lowly—impregnated society in general with some of the perfume of holiness which rose up from the depths of the Catacombs to the very streets and dwellings of the city. The philosophers themselves could not but catch some stray wreath of the sweet fragrance, and believed the aroma came from their own laboratory of philosophical thoughts. Then they spoke of justice, and of the dignity of man as man, and of virtue to be practiced for its own sake; and finally—for it came the last—of charity for the outcast and the poor. When Marcus Aurelius and other princes of the Antonine dynasty thought of attending to the needs of the destitute, and the orphan, they had under their eyes the numerous charitable institutions of the Church, and they could hear the mute preaching of Popes, and priests, and deacons, intent on assuaging the endless miseries of plebeians. Can it be surprising that at the sight of so much tenderness for human woes which had been so far neglected by all, they felt at last they also had a heart, and it was a duty to sympathize with those wretches who until then had never experienced sympathy? And let it be said that these “charitable institutions of the State” were few indeed, and far from conspicuous, whilst the charity of the Church glowed and sparkled under the eyes of all. It has required, in fact, the long and painstaking labors of the learned to find out in classical lore some mention

of this new charitable spirit among the pagans. Until these late discoveries—embracing, if we do not mistake, a couple of cases—it was the general opinion of scholars that all-powerful Rome had never thought of relieving real distress, and attending in the least to the wants of the needy, however much policy taught her to distribute to the plebs the usual allowances of the poor citizen, namely, *panem et circenses*, so as to keep the lower orders quiet and well behaved. Still, we maintain that the few examples of charity dilated upon at length by M. de Champagny, were in fact merely suggested by a spirit of love which nothing could repress, as it came from the heart of Christ, filling with the sweetest milk the breasts of the Church. And thus philosophy had not prepared the way for Christianity by her doctrine, but only trimmed her own opinions according to the new pattern laid out openly before the world.

But to prove more satisfactorily that the apostolic work had been prepared, and rendered more easy of accomplishment, it is asserted boldly that idolatry was on the wane, its follies publicly disbelieved, nay, ridiculed and derided, and it would have died of itself even had not Christianity distinctly proclaimed the purer doctrine of monotheism. The open attacks of philosophers, the derisions of dramatists, the sneers of prose writers of the class of Lucian, the silence of oracles, owing to a want of belief, the evidently decreasing number and solemnity of sacrifices, etc., are openly brought forward as so many proofs that the world could scarcely be called any longer “idolatrous,” and that the boast of Christians that the cross of their Master had really broken down idols all over the world, could scarcely be substantiated. We say that in spite of all this, polytheism was still deeply-rooted everywhere, and more rampant perhaps than at any other epoch ; that undoubtedly it would have continued to prevail, had it not been for the preaching of the apostles ; and that the sudden melting away of this deep incrustation of error all over the world, is the most striking proof of the divinity of our holy religion, chiefly when we reflect on the homogeneity this religion introduced.

We will treat at greater length, and with more details, in a future chapter, so important a question ; many apologists of the Christian religion have, moreover, done it much more successfully than we could here, in so narrow a compass. Yet a word may be sufficient, and cannot be altogether omitted. It is not true that the attacks of

philosophers against idolatry, were ever "open." For a long time they did not dare ; the case of Socrates and Plato is well known. When some Epicureans, finding themselves more safe, began to speak "openly," they directed their attacks more against religion in general than against polytheism. The poem of Lucretius had no other object but to undermine totally the belief in God and in a future life ; he preached openly atheism and materialism ; and as there was yet at the time a deep sense of the *supernatural* pervading all classes of society, as it is certain that the great majority of men were profoundly impressed with religious feelings, however debased, Lucretius had no chance of succeeding in his detestable attempt, less, perhaps, than the scientists of our day who are laboring for the same cause.

Every reflecting mind will, on the contrary, be persuaded that the book *De rerum natura* must have powerfully strengthened the cause of polytheism ; as it was then altogether identified with religion, and men were not prepared to reject religion altogether on account of the wild dreams of a poet. Some patricians of his age and of the following may have been influenced by his desponding doctrines ; the people at large could not be inoculated with the virus. Manuscripts were then too dear for the plebs ; and rich men preferred, no doubt, the amatory poems of Ovid, full of the most brilliant mythology, to the dry discussions of Lucretius, which many, even of their class, could scarcely understand. With the exception of this unfortunate philosophical writer of verse, who killed himself at the age of forty years, we are not aware that the "Sophists" of his time, as they were called, took a great deal of trouble to sap the popular religion by metaphysical dissertations. There were then more teachers of rhetoric than of philosophy, as speaking was a great deal more in honor than what is called thinking. We may, therefore, consider it as settled that the teaching of philosophers had not prepared the downfall of idolatry. We know besides that the Alexandrian Neo-Platonists, the most celebrated school of the period, were all enlisted on the side of polytheism, and tried their best to render it acceptable to human reason. A few words will show that "the derisions of dramatists" could not be more operative for the same purpose. The stage, neither in Greece nor in Rome, was, at the epoch of Augustus, what it had been four or five hundred years before, at Athens, when Aristophanes flourished, and indeed ridiculed the "gods." The incessant laughter of the Athenians had not shaken

idolatry in the least ; but at the period we are considering, when the apostles preached and the Church began her heavenly career, the stage had gone, and thus the laughter had ceased. Instead of anti-polytheistic comedies, the Romans and the Greeks were then saturated with the atrocities of the amphitheater, and the entrancing intricacies of the races in the circus ; and neither spectacles could be said to prepare the downfall of polytheism, which, on the contrary, was glorified by their adjuncts. This simple observation may suffice for this objection.

The third one, namely, the sneers of Lucian and other writers of his class, will not detain us longer, since Lucian came on the stage only when polytheism had already been successfully attacked by many Christian writers. The satirist of Samosata, in the ridicule he pours on the gods of Greece, is scarcely as pungent as many Fathers of the Church who had preceded him, or who lived in his time. His efforts came, therefore, too late, and the effect produced, such as it was, cannot be attributed to him alone, but was rather the effect of the powerful attacks of Christian apologists who used Christian arguments. We doubt, however, if this kind of warfare had a great deal of success for the object proposed ; and a few reflections on the subject will not be inappropriate.

What were the thoughts of Roman or Greek idolaters when they prostrated themselves before the statues of Jupiter, of Minerva, of Apollo, etc. ; when they burned incense in their honor ; when they brought to the doors of their temples victims for sacrifice, we are altogether unable to say. Yet they did not, we are sure, think of their dress or undress, of the materials of which the statues were composed, nor even, we hope, of the scandalous stories connected with their names. Our reason for thinking so is that, had they done so, had their mind been intent chiefly on those peculiarities, polytheism could not have endured a hundred years in such refined countries, among such intelligent people as were those of Greece and Rome. Yet these things were mostly the butt of the sarcasms of Lucian, as well as, often at least, of the Fathers of the Church. Polytheism, with all its absurdities, had a substratum of truth which had kept it alive for many centuries, and would have continued to prolong its life many more, if the light of Christianity had not enlightened the minds of men, and convinced the world of the sinfulness of idolatry. Yes, the *sinfulness* of idolatry, this was the great cause of its downfall ; and the religion of Christ alone could convince the world of it.

No philosopher, no satirist had ever thought of appealing to the human conscience, as to the judge always ready to condemn its abominations ; and had they attempted to do so, the pagan world would not have believed them ; because idolaters, when intent on their worship, could not dream they were performing a sinful act, nay, were persuaded that they deserved well of heaven by doing so. Conscience, unfortunately, erroneous conscience, was thus enlisted on the side of idolatry. Let the reader imagine the moral situation of a pagan, attached to his worship, and sincere as far as an idolater could be, opening the pages of Lucretius and reading the philosophical developments of his materialistic atomic theory and of his wholesale atheism. He had been fully persuaded that the whole world was invisibly peopled by innumerable beings who commanded his respect, his fears, and his hopes. The blessings he received every day were bestowed by gods of every degree ; there was the father of all, the Olympian Jupiter ; the brilliant Apollo, the inspirer of noble thoughts ; the chaste Diana in the forests, Pallas and Mars to lead to victory the armies of the State ; there were also the inferior deities of the fields, of the gardens, of the groves ; the sporting attendants of Neptune, whom the sea obeyed ; nature in fact was under a universal supernatural spell. And this was not altogether an error ; the truth of it is that God dwells in fact in the universe, attends to the wants of men, expects our prayers, and listens to them ; and he is indeed the Father of light and “the bestower of all good gifts.”

But the reader of the book *De natura rerum* learns with surprise that nothing of this is true ; that it is folly to rely on heaven, and to believe that the gods have anything to do with mankind ; all we possess and enjoy is the result of chance, or of inexorable laws, whose concatenation is blindly derived from sheer necessity ; the whole supernatural world is a delusion, and religion of whatever kind a mere imposture. Was not the conscience of the pagan instinctively moved to rebel against such blasphemous doctrines ? Would not his devotion to his gods increase from the very attempt to make of him an atheist ?

We cannot, therefore, be surprised that in the time of the first Cæsars there was rather an expansion than a decline of polytheism. A great number of magnificent temples were built ; the religious festivals were celebrated on a scale of splendor never yet witnessed ; the number of victims surpassed what had ever taken place before ; —those who pretend the contrary refer to the time of Julian the

Apostate, three hundred years later, when Christianity had already triumphed over polytheism. Instead of being less devoted to her religion, Rome then enlarged the circle of her superstitions, and admitted in her Pantheon the gods of Egypt, of Syria, of Persia, of Central Asia. Serapis, Isis and Osiris, Astarte, Helios, Mithra, Buddha itself, it seems, although perhaps a little later, had their devotees in the capital of the world. And most remarkable of all, this ardent religious feeling was chiefly conspicuous in the higher classes of society. The lower orders remained what they had always been, unintelligently devoted to a sensual worship in which they found the satisfaction of all their passions. The patrician caste, which alone could have been influenced by the doctrine of Epicurism, became, on the contrary, more fascinated by the pomps of religious festivals and mysteries. They began about that time to attach, in their opinion, the permanence of the Roman State to the preservation of polytheism. Rome, they thought, had been raised to the splendor they witnessed by the help of the gods, and Rome would fall if the gods turned their back on her, on account of her desertion. It is known that this became a serious objection against Christianity in the time of St. Augustine, who took the trouble to devote several chapters of the *City of God* to its refutation.

To resume the whole subject in a few words, it is certain that no one acquainted with the state of the world at the time of the preaching of the apostles can consent to admit that idolatry was less rooted in Asia, Africa, and a great part of Europe, than it had ever been. The only difficulty for intelligent men is derived from the fact that some books were published chiefly at Rome, which advocated atheism and sneered at the popular religion ; and that undoubtedly a certain number of the patrician class in the city, beginning with Julius Caesar, had adopted these materialistic and atheistic ideas. The whole objection rests, therefore, on the city of Rome alone ; but we have just proved that it remained strongly attached to idolatry, which, in fact, opposed there a greater resistance to the Church than on any other spot of the empire. All large cities were altogether Christian when the Capitol continued to offer the statues of the gods to the veneration of the Romans. The consequence is startling : the destruction of idolatry in so short a space of time all over the three continents under consideration, cannot be explained naturally, and remains a divine fact. Particularly when we reflect that the polytheism which was to be conquered took so many different shapes, and

was to be battered down by so many different weapons of attack ; Syria and Asia Minor, for instance, differing so completely in that regard from Greece, Italy, Gaul, or Africa. The difficulty was yet much enhanced by the homogeneity of religion and morals which Christianity came to establish everywhere, so as to deserve really the name of Catholicity and to obtain soon that of Christendom. More proofs of the strength of idolatry will be adduced when we come to speak of Greece, and of her conversion to Christ. Meanwhile we must hasten on.

2. The thoroughness of the moral and social revolution which was thus attempted, will soon come for consideration ; but a word must be said first of the look—rationally speaking—the design must have assumed, had it been explained fully to a cool and intelligent man for his approval at the outset : supposing it to be merely a human project, and not to come from a divine inspiration, with the assurance of a divine help. Imagine that St. Paul, in his enthusiasm for the new cause he had just embraced, had tried once to bring out in detail, in a private conversation with—let us say—Festus, the object he had in view with his co-apostles. As a particular motive for embracing Christianity he places before the eyes of the Roman pro-consul the power of the new religion, which has received from heaven the indefeasible promise of a complete triumph, near at hand, over polytheism all through the world, and of a mighty ability for bringing all nations to the belief in the same God and the practice of the same pure morality.

“ You are insane, Paul,” Festus would have answered with great calmness and determination ; “ you, with your twelve unknown and uneducated brethren, you intend to dethrone Jove in Greece and the West, Osiris in Africa, Astarte in Syria, Mylitta in Babylon, and those other powerful gods of the far Orient, whose names we Romans do not even know ? You want to replace this worship by that of Jesus of Nazareth, crucified a few years ago, in conformity with a sentence of Pontius Pilate ? I doubt if a madman ever broached such extravagant and foolish scheme. As to the idea of bringing all races of men to the same belief and morality, this is still worse than the first, and supposes a greater intensity of folly. You intend to do what Rome, with her immense power, never thought herself able to do. Do you not see that if she could bring all the nations she conquers, not only to the same worship, but to the same moral and social customs, she would do it most willingly, because of

the immense advantage this would give her over the rest of the world by such a powerful homogeneity of so many millions of men ? She does not attempt it, and consents to rule an empire without real unity, a kind of patchwork composed of heterogenous pieces, which some day or other will part from the center more easily than they were brought in connection with it. She consents to this, on account of her inability to do better. . And you pretend that you will be able to do more ! And you speak of erecting a statue, not composed of four or more different pieces of metal—as your prophet Daniel has it—but of pure and unalloyed gold, indestructible, compact, and eternal ! I am sure I will live long enough to see your projects end in smoke ; and in ten centuries from this the world will continue to be as idolatrous and as divided as it has been in the long past, and as it is certainly at present.”

Thus Festus would have spoken, had he been merely a man of sense : because the project of the apostles, judged only by the rules of common sense, was a wild and foolish project ; and no one but God could give it success and permanence. True, it is said enthusiasm can effect what a cool judgment alone cannot ; and Mahometanism succeeded as well as Christianity, because of the deep faith of its adherents. Thus the faith of the Christian apostles—and by this they mean fanaticism and unreasonable expectation—was the real and adequate cause of the success they met with, etc., etc. Enthusiasm, fanaticism, are mere words, when they are not supported by physical power. Mahometanism triumphed in many countries, because the Koran was preached at the point of the sword. Had it not been for the scimiter of the Saracens, and later on of the Turks, the doctrine of Mahomet would never have emerged from the sands of Arabia ; and with all its triumphs, not a single branch of the Japhetic race was ever permanently conquered by it. Greece succumbed after nearly a thousand years of resistance ; and a good part of Greece has already been rescued from the grasp of its enemy ; the rest will, no doubt, soon follow. The simple and unanswerable truism has been repeatedly brought forward by the apologists of the Christian religion—that the apostles never used arms and carnal weapons ; and the nations they conquered morally were much more enlightened and powerful than were the peoples subdued by Islam. But no account seems to have been taken of this remark, for the reason, we suppose, that it cannot be replied to. We are in our right, however, when we maintain that faith alone could not have

subdued the world, unless it came from God and was truly upheld by God. Apart from the supposition of some real divine plan, the project of establishing Christianity was evidently a mad attempt.

3. And what renders its feasibility less intelligible, is the complete thoroughness of the intended change. It included the whole being of man, besides all religious, social, and even, in consequence, political institutions. Man himself was to be radically altered by the adoption of a new faith, the complete subjection to a new standard of morality, new aims, new thoughts, new views of the world, and of himself. The religious and social institutions created everywhere by Christianity, were altogether antagonistic to the previous ones, which, consequently, were to disappear. But, more than all this, the unavoidable conclusion was to bring on a thoroughly different political system ; although Christianity never waged war against any of the subsisting civil institutions, and, on the contrary, established firmly the broad principle contained in the following words of St. Paul : "Let every soul be subject to higher powers."\*

To judge rightly of the completeness of this mighty revolution, we have only to compare human history before Christ, with what it has been since he came. Every educated man is somewhat acquainted with the difference between ancient and modern history. But it requires a special study of human events, of the social system, of all the peculiarities of human life in both periods, to understand thoroughly the astounding power of the Christian religion. To produce a conviction firmer still, the study must be carried on as far as the inner life of mankind ; for exterior appearances, although really changed in a high degree, present yet features in common, calculated to deceive many unwary readers and observers ; but when the student of man enters into the heart of all sincere Christians, and looks into their desires, loves, fears, and projects, nay, into their temptations, interior conflicts and triumphs over spiritual enemies, into everything which constitutes the interior, that is, *real* man, how could he not be convinced that "the kingdom of God" has really been established on earth by Christ, instead of the "kingdom of the world, and the prince of this world," which previously ruled supreme all over the globe ?

4. The means employed by the apostles to produce such radical changes in the manners and thoughts of men, add considerably to

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\* Rom. xiii. 1.

the impossibility of the thing, considered in a human point of view. Here we cannot be in the dark, form only conjectures, and conclude from mere probabilities. St. Paul has been explicit enough, and nothing better can be done than quote the plain words he used in some of his epistles : “ My speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the showing of the spirit and power. That your faith might not stand on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.”\* “ The Jews require signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom ; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles, foolishness ; but to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”† And again : “ We have not received the spirit of this world, but the spirit that is of God ; that we may know the things that are given us from God. Which things also we speak, not in the learned words of human wisdom, but in the doctrine of the spirit.”‡

All the epistles of the apostles, and everything we know concerning the first propagation of Christianity, establish solidly the fact, that the only human means employed was *preaching*, and from the words of St. Paul, just quoted, it was a simple way of preaching, without any attempt at philosophy and rhetoric. The simple events of the life of Jesus and his doctrine, such as he had imparted it to his disciples, were absolutely the only motive brought forward before Jews or Gentiles, to attract them to the new religion. This was repeated over and over again by the apostles, in the synagogues, in the open squares of cities, in front of pagan temples, in private houses, wherever a hearing could be obtained. There was not any attempt at those ordinary means of attraction which often act powerfully on modern converts ; neither great temples erected to the true God, nor solemn ceremonies, nor entrancing music, nor finally—at first, at least—books and epistles. All the churches of Syria, Egypt, Babylonia, Asia Minor, Greece, the Islands, Italy, Spain, and Gaul—we mean all the congregations of the faithful gathered together in the name of Christ, in all those countries, in apostolic times—were the fruit of preaching, and of a simple way of preaching, without any attempt at eloquence, and at what is now justly called “ *sensation*. ”

It is true, St. Paul adds frequently, that this preaching was ac-

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\* 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5.

† 1 Cor. i. 22, et seq.

‡ Cap. ii. 12, 13.

companied "with power ;" but the power he means was only that of the Holy Ghost, whose interior grace moved the hearts of men who otherwise would have remained altogether insensible. He may also mean, on some occasions, the "miraculous power" displayed by these first messengers of Christ, the power of "signs and wonders," calculated to strike the mind of pagans ; for such display was primarily intended to convert "infidels," not to increase the conviction of the faithful : "Tongues are for a sign not to believers, but to unbelievers." \*

But either the interior grace of the Holy Spirit, or the sight of prodigies which could come only from God, was a supernatural influence wholly apart from anything earthly. Just on this account must the first propagation of Christianity be pronounced to have been evidently a "divine fact."

5. After all these considerations, it is proper, in conclusion, to throw a glance at the universal corruption of the world where this mighty change so suddenly took place, and also at the rapid downfall of idolatry, so powerful until that day, and so weak from that day forward. The moral taint which, like leprosy, had extended over the whole surface of humanity, predominated in some spots of it to a degree which can scarcely be imagined. To attempt a lengthened sketch of it would, almost uselessly, delay the narrative which at this moment awaits us, as it were, impatiently. But there is a compendious way to produce conviction ; and this is the proper moment for it.

When Pompeii was unearthed, and the testimony of the private life of Italian pagans, in the first century of our era, was at once produced before the eyes of a degenerate Christian world, two classes of mute witnesses were brought forward, each of them most striking in its way. The first was composed of innumerable tokens of the high material civilization of the period. It became at once certain that art, luxury, literature, science, prevailed not only in the capital of the world, but even in cities comparatively insignificant, as Pompeii certainly was. The degree of universal culture which this supposed, was most astonishing, because, in modern times, among Europeans, it is only in very large cities that this display of exterior elegance is witnessed. Thus, the conviction was firmly established that Hellenic and Roman civilization had reached in its highest

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\* 1 Cor. xiv. 22.

development, the most out-of-the-way places of the empire. But a second class of witnesses also appeared, which naturally produced a recoil of horror. It was composed of innumerable tokens, likewise, but tokens of a moral degradation which nobody at the time, certainly, expected. In books which describe the artistic wealth of the long-buried city, this is never mentioned, or only in a phrase or two. But all this "heap of rottenness" has been properly and systematically arranged in a great number of large rooms which contain "Pompeii's treasure," in Naples. And it must be said without fear of contradiction, that any one who consents to give a furtive look at these proofs of beastliness on the part of Pompeians, cannot conceive how a "refined" people could possibly place this foul mass of moral slop under the eyes not only of their friends and visitors, but particularly of their wives and daughters. For all this has been found in the ordinary apartments of their houses, and must have constantly fallen under the inspection of every one. This is certainly sufficient for the present purpose, and proves that the apostles of Christ had an immense task before them when they undertook the reformation of the world.

With regard to the sudden collapse of idolatry, it is a phenomenon as well established as it is inexplicable. That in the year 300 of our era, the whole universe, particularly the Roman part of it, was yet full of idols, and of magnificent temples erected to false gods, is undeniable. That two hundred years later all this had disappeared and been replaced by edifices consecrated to the God of the Christians, is sure likewise. It is well known that all this is accounted for by some sanguine partisans of "natural explanations," with regard to facts of this nature, by simply referring this prodigious substitution of a cult to another, to a decree or two issued by Theodosius the Great. "He ordered," they say, "that all heathen temples should be closed, and sacrifices should cease." In their opinion this is a very simple, natural, and sufficient "explanation."

The only remark this well-known fact naturally suggests to a man of sense, is that if Theodosius issued such decrees, it was because they were sure to be executed, owing to the perfect willingness of the populations. These were already mostly Christians; and in many cases they not only cheered the emperor on account of the enactment of these laws; but they in fact called for them, or openly expressed their desire it should be so. At any rate, since the decrees

were obeyed without any threat at insurrection or emeute, it is evident the mass of the people were not opposed to it; and thus the revolution had already taken place which these decrees merely consecrated and declared as being irrevocably established. A few popular movements of no duration, at Alexandria and some other places, cannot refute the general argument.

Idolatry was consequently destroyed by Christianity itself, independently of the imperial will, which only acknowledged the fact. The reader must be left to the consideration of this naturally incredible revolution, which alone would suffice to prove the supernatural and divine character of the new religion. But what renders it more striking still, is the homogeneity in faith and morals, which succeeded to the religious and mental anarchy which characterized the long period of polytheism, particularly the end of it. It is unnecessary to enlarge on this last subject, treated at length in *Gentilism*. But a word on the agreement of a large part of mankind on matters of faith and morals, which the Christian religion prescribed, cannot but render more effective the almost sudden collapse of idolatry. The world had never witnessed such a spectacle as this, except at the very beginning of mankind, when the patriarchal religion prevailed universally. That millions of men should agree upon a formulary of belief, and adopt the same strict articles of a pure moral code, was perfectly unexpected at the time, and presents an insurmountable difficulty as to a "natural explanation," when we consider the almost inevitable result of any kind of discussion among men when they are left to themselves. Then, indeed, it is sure that with the best intention to clear up the proposed questions, and come to a mutual understanding, the upshot of it will be that they will "agree to disagree," as the modern adage has so strongly expressed it. Our ancestors, when they were first converted, found, on the contrary, an inexpressible delight in the thought that they were knit together, in very large numbers, in the same belief, and the same practice of virtue. God alone could have thus brought back mankind—at least a considerable part of it—to the former unanimity which characterized men at the origin of society. This argument, developed at length, would of itself prove the divine origin of Christianity.

And this agreement was based on "faith," a new word expressing an idea altogether new to the Gentiles. The meaning of the term here is, strictly, *a belief founded on the revealed word of God, as*

*explained authoritatively by the Church.* The Jews had it for a very few points, which alone were insisted upon by the Synagogue. The Gentiles, that is, the world at large, must have had it in primitive times ; but they had lost it, and they were reduced, in order to know the truth, to their senses and their reason. Our senses teach us often things that are true, but they often deceive us ; and of things spiritual and supernatural, they can say nothing. Our reason reaches the *spiritual* world to a certain extent, but not the *supernatural* in any degree. With our senses and our reason we can reach a great number of natural truths, but nothing more ; yet man aims necessarily at higher things. These he obtains through divine revelation ; and thus his ability to reach the truth is increased by the whole extent of the field of *faith*. The rationalist thinks that this is mere dream-land ; but he is wofully mistaken. For he himself must admit, if he is not an atheist, that in case God speaks, man must believe him ; and our reason—the great and only support of the rationalist—is very well able to distinguish if God has spoken or not. The Christian even is directed *not* to believe unless he has rational grounds to think that God has spoken, because, as the theologians say, *grace supposes nature* ; and thus reason cannot be opposed to faith.

Should we now wish to examine which is the most solid ground of truth among the three which have been just enumerated, namely, the senses, reason, and faith, we find that when truth is reached by any of these three channels, it is as firm in one case as in any of the two others ; because truth of itself is infallible, and there can be no degree between truth and truth. But in order to reach truth, the senses are not, by far, so good a means as reason ; because they deceive us much oftener. Reason itself is not so sure a road to truth as faith, on account of the obstacles which our passions place in the way. But when the first and all-important question has been decided, How far have we reason to believe that God has spoken ? it is evident that faith is much more likely not to induct us into error than either our senses or our reason. There can then be neither some sensible delusion, as in the first case, nor so much danger of the interference of human passions, as in the second.

In the matter now on hand, that is, the truths as proposed to us by the Church, faith can be said to be rationally unshakable ; because the grounds of the Christian's belief in revelation, both with regard to Christ—the Revealer and Founder—and with regard to the

Church—the Expounder and Interpreter—are of so convincing a nature, that mathematical axioms themselves cannot be more so. At least it is sure that millions of Christians have died for the truth of their faith ; and if we have well read Montucla's *History of Mathematics*, when Archimedes was killed by a Roman soldier, he was certainly at that moment investigating some problem of geometry or mechanics, but he did not die for asserting the conclusion of his mathematical operations. We are not aware of any other case involving axioms and principles of this kind, which can bring on a question of martyrdom. Personally, we would not stake our life on the theory of *parallels*, or of the *hyperbola's asymptotes*.

These preliminaries being settled, is it not very remarkable that, all at once, when the Church was first established, the domain of truth was enlarged for man, so as to include henceforth all that regards the personality of God, his triune Unity, the Incarnate Word, the creation of the world, the redemption and destiny of man, the immortality of his soul, and the resurrection of his body ; together with a host of other propositions included in those general Christian truths ? And all these articles of faith were so firmly believed by the immense multitude of Christians, that all were ready to lay down their lives for the least important of them. This unanimity of belief extended to all classes, to the rich and the poor, the philosopher and the ignorant, the great and influential citizen and the lowly plebeian. And the denials of heretics with regard to some particular points of this universal belief, did not impair this unanimity ; since the heretics were immediately cut off by excommunication from the body of the Church, which continued to present to the world the spectacle of an immense society knit together in the bonds of faith and love.

It is needless to ask the usual question, How could all this be brought on by human means ?

## CHAPTER V.

**JERUSALEM A STARTING-POINT, NOT A CENTER—PALESTINE—SYRIA AND CHALDEA—THE FIRST CONQUESTS OF CHRISTIANITY.**

**1. *Church of Jerusalem—“Petrine and Pauline parties.”***

THE names of the eleven apostles are given in the first chapter of the *Acts*: “Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James, the son of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the son of James.” To complete the college of twelve, Matthias was elected in place of the traitor Iscariotes.

At the feast of Pentecost, fifty days after the Pasch, the Holy Ghost came down visibly upon them, and they were filled with a superhuman courage, adequate to the most onerous duties. This was altogether a supernatural event, as are many great facts of human history. It requires a very slight acquaintance with it to recognize this law, which so many men of our day reject.\*

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\* As soon as any of these supernatural facts is denied, several, and often many, important and purely human ones become unintelligible. Thus, if the creative process, as revealed in Scripture, is rejected, man is immediately left to his own ingenuity to frame any system of cosmogony he chooses; and, owing to the fertility of his imagination, the exterior world which we see, and feel, and touch, becomes a problem, at once irresolvable, and at last incomprehensible. Thus, likewise, should the origin of moral evil, as related in Scripture, be scornfully set aside, the ever-present human fact of our own inclination to evil, with all its consequences, becomes an unfathomable mystery, forever hidden from us, and altogether impervious to reason. Again, reject supernatural redemption, as believed by Christians, and not only the mission of Christ, his life and death, become inexplicable, but the whole subsequent history of his religion is a myth, as well as a delusion and a snare. Finally, to come to the particular event of Pentecost; the destruction of idolatry and the spiritual regeneration of the world, namely, the morally overwhelming fact of modern Christianity, is a phenomenon without a cause; since all the natural explanations of it, given by very ingenious writers, completely fail to bring conviction to the human mind.

A multitude of Jews from every country under heaven, who were at the time assembled in Jerusalem for the festival, came to hear them; in all appearance, ready to be convinced. This circumstance confirmed, no doubt, the apostles in the design they had already formed, of making a last attempt at the conversion of their countrymen, before going to the Gentiles. Humanly speaking, there was a great probability of success for a large part of the nation. It was in this field, certainly, that natural facilities could be recognized, more than among the surrounding pagan tribes. During the three last years of his life, Jesus had produced such a favorable impression on a great number of the Jews, had benefited so many of them by his miracles, had showed by all his acts such a power and such a goodness, had, in fact, realized so completely the idea most of them entertained of a great prophet, if not the Messiah; he was so evidently the benefactor of his race, and a true messenger of God, that on some occasions they went so far as to wish to make him their king, and place themselves under his rule and absolute control. He had, in fact, to fly from them to prevent such an extraordinary proceeding, at least once in his public life.

His late triumphal entry into the city must, on the day of Pentecost, have been yet fresh in the memory of all. They had then recognized him as the true son of David; and this title alone comprised for them everything that was dear and glorious. From this acknowledgment to that of the true Messiah, there was but one step; and it may be said, without straining the argument and entering the domain of paradox, that what had happened since the day of his triumph, even his greatest humiliations and sufferings, were calculated to revive in them their former admiration, and the most enthusiastic veneration and reverence. All they had seen directly before and after his death was of a nature to produce in them those feelings, had they not been under an almost inexplicable satanic influence, had they not unfortunately continued in the obstinacy which they displayed before the tribunal of Pilate, and at the foot of his Cross.

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An extended review of the action of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, would prove conclusively that history is absolutely unintelligible, unless that divine influence is admitted to the full extent of the Christian belief. We have here the sketch of a most important and interesting book, which has not yet been written, and waits for a man of good will. The materials of it, however, are contained in the works of the Fathers and Christian writers of all previous ages.

But, humanly speaking, the apostles might very well believe that this could not be any more the case.

During two or three days, it was known, a complete change of disposition for the worse had come upon them. Jesus appeared to have no friends, no admirers, in the whole nation ; yea, only enemies. It looked, indeed, like the fury of hell let loose against him ; they called for his blood, and assumed the guilt of his death for themselves and their children.

But terrible portents had followed to open their eyes : the sun obscured, the earth quaking, visible ghosts rising from their graves, the veil of the Holy of Holies split asunder, all Nature protesting against such an awful crime ! Who of them, except the most obdurate, could resist the conviction that they had indeed “killed the author of life” ? as St. Peter said in his second speech to them.\* The new prodigies they were witnessing in the moral transformation of the apostles of Jesus, chiefly the gift of tongues, which they evidently possessed, and their noble bearing, so different from their previous craven spirit—everything was calculated to bring the whole nation to the feet of Peter and his associates.

We say Peter, first and foremost : for is he not entitled to this position by many texts, allusions, and suppositions recorded in the New Testament ? During the earthly life of the Saviour he was always the spokesman of the disciples,† and to him our Lord invariably turned when he wished to address his apostles.‡ Does any one pretend that this was owing to the energy and ardor of his character, to the natural disposition he had of always pushing himself forward ? Many passages prove that the Saviour himself gave this position to Peter : He called him “the Rock” on which he would build his Church. § To him he gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven. || For him he prayed that his faith might never fail, and that he might confirm that of the other disciples. ¶ Him, in fine, he intrusted with the care of feeding both the sheep and lambs of his flock.\*\*

Peter had received, therefore, the first place in the college of the twelve, and this prerogative is confirmed by the position he assumed directly after the ascension of Christ, in the midst of the disciples,

\* Acts, iii. 15.      † Matt. xix. 27 ; xvi. 16 ; Luke, xii. 41, et seq.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 40, et seq.      § Matt. xvi. 18 ; John, i. 42.

|| Matt. xvi. 19.      ¶ Luke, xxii. 82.      \*\* John, xxi. 15, 16, 17.

and at the head of the Christian community. It was he who procured the election of a new apostle instead of the traitor.\* On all occasions he rises to speak in the name of the whole college.† He alone pronounces sentence against Ananias and Saphira,‡ expels Simon Magus from the communion of the faithful,§ receives in the Church, by a special revelation, the centurion Cornelius—the first pagan admitted among the disciples of Christ—without obliging him to receive the rite of circumcision. Lastly, his voice is decisive in the first apostolic Council at Jerusalem.||

No one can admit that it is owing to mere chance, whenever the names of the apostles are recorded in the New Testament, that Peter is always mentioned the first. On one occasion, it is true, St. Paul ¶ names him after having noticed the “other apostles” and the “brothers of the Lord :” but evidently the intention of the writer was to place him above the others by such a way of expressing himself.

Meanwhile, Jerusalem was stirred up and agitated with the most violent commotion. That great and guilty city felt, as it were, an impending doom ; yet the solemn voice she heard announced that it was still time to avert it.

“ Ye, men of Israel,” exclaimed Peter, “ hear these words : Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs . . . . This same being delivered up by the counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have crucified and put to death by the hands of wicked men. But God has raised him up . . . . as it was impossible that he should be detained in the bonds of death. For David said concerning him . . . . : ‘ Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thy holy one to see corruption.’ . . . . Let me speak freely to you, brethren, of the patriarch David, that he died and was buried ; and his sepulchre is with us to the present day. But he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn to him that of the fruit of his loins one should sit upon his throne. He therefore prophesied and spoke of the resurrection of Christ ; for neither was Christ left in the grave, neither did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus, God hath raised up again, whereof we are all witnesses. . . . .

“ When they heard these things, they felt compunction in their

\* Acts, i. 15.

† Acts, ii. 14 ; iii. 12 ; iv. 8 ; v. 29.

‡ Acts, v. 3.

§ Ib. viii. 9.

|| Acts, xv. 7.

¶ 1 Cor. ix. 5.

heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles : ‘What shall we do, men, brethren?’ But Peter to them : ‘Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins.’ . . .

“They, therefore, that received his word were baptized : and there were added to them on that day about three thousand souls.”

At the next preaching of the Prince of the Apostles, five thousand more declared themselves disciples of Christ, and the Church of Jerusalem, the first element of Catholicity, was born.

Its characteristics are fully described in the book of St. Luke. The most remarkable one is the spirit and the organization of charity. “All they that believed were together, and had all things in common. They sold their possessions and goods, and divided them to all, according as every one had need.\* And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul ; neither did any one of them say that of what he possessed any thing was his own ; but all things were common to them. . . . Neither was there any among them that wanted. For as many as were owners of lands, or houses, sold them, and brought the price of the things they sold and laid it down before the feet of the apostles ; and distribution was made to any man, according as he had need.”†

We see in these few words the spirit of charity and its organization. The first is ardent : “the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul ;” the second is energetic : “All things were common to them . . . they brought the price of what they sold, and laid it down before the feet of the apostles, and distribution was made,” etc. How perfectly all the details of such *distribution* as this are known now to us ! Is there any country in the world that has not been the witness, some time or other, of the execution of a plan so simple, yet so comprehensive and perfect ? The Church of Jerusalem was the first to set the example. The Roman Power, even in the examples quoted by M. de Champagny, did it very imperfectly, and adopted an altogether different system by making charity a State institution.

But there is the case of the Essenes, who did the same before Christianity ; and it seems that the Church of Jerusalem took example from them, and was, in fact, at first a mere Esselian sect, thus becoming attractive to a great number, and increasing powerfully,

\* Acts, ii. 44.

† Acts, iv. 32, et seq.

by the mere natural influence of an unusual philanthropy. The reply is easy and simple : The Essenes practiced a common life, and the portraiture of them left us by Josephus and Philo, has indeed some resemblance to the graceful picture contained in the Acts of the Apostles ; but many traits of their association differ altogether from the Christian, as Fleury justly remarks ; for instance, their doctrine of fatalism, and their strong Jewish bias carried almost to fanaticism. It is known, at this time, that they took an active part in the last war of the Jews with Rome, and they perished almost entirely in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus ; whilst the Christians, forewarned in time by their teachers, left the city and escaped. It is thus evident that the Church of Jerusalem remained aloof from the Essenean nationalism, and had nothing to do with them, whilst from them—the Essenes—probably the Ebionites arose. The Christians received the spirit of charity from the Holy Ghost, not from any pre-existing sect. It is altogether certain that the Christians never acknowledged the Ebionites as belonging to their organization, rejected entirely their extreme Judaism, and their opposition *in toto* to the Gentile world. The Essenes, on the contrary, combined at last with Ebionism.

A word has just been said of the organization of charity ; but the apostles soon found it interfered with their spiritual duties ; and at that moment complaints arising among the Hellenist Christians that their widows were neglected in the daily ministration, and the Jewish poor were, on the contrary, favored, the idea of creating proper ministers for all charitable purposes, led to the ordination of seven deacons, whose names can be read in the sixth chapter of the book of St. Luke, and, strangely enough, are found to be all Greek proper names, without a single pure Hebrew among them. Fleury first remarked it ; and we are surprised that the German Tubingen school never, to our knowledge, commented upon it, and never endeavored to find in it a support for their particular opinions. The truth is that it is a new and strong proof that these German theories are altogether unsupported by facts. Let us see it for a moment.

All admit that the Church of Jerusalem was Judeo-Christian (we will see it more in detail when speaking of St. James, her first bishop). But the Tubingen school understands the epithet very differently from Catholic writers. According to the first, a Judeo-Christian differed essentially from an originally Gentile disciple ; the first—the Judeo-Christian—made it an absolute necessity for all—

Hebrews and Gentiles—to practice yet the Mosaic law, circumcision included, and submit only to the rule of Jewish leaders. The moral law for them was yet understood in the carnal sense so general among the Hebrews, etc. This is the view taken of them by the German theorists. But Catholic authors believe this to be a mistake, and say that a Judeo-Christian continued, it is true, to conform to the Mosaic law, but did not impose it on the Gentiles, as St. James himself proved it ought not to be, in the Council of Jerusalem. They maintain that the true Judeo-Christians did not exclude the converted Gentiles from the Christian ministry, and that on no occasion did they show such an exclusive spirit as is claimed for them by the German school. In proof of these assertions the whole history of the ordination of the first deacons comes in most appropriately. It can be evidently concluded from it: First, that the Church of Jerusalem was not composed exclusively of men originally Hebrew, but that a good number were Hellenist converts, or at least proselytes: Secondly, that the antipathy of the Jews for strangers was not so great as supposed, since, when it is question of electing officers of the kind suggested here, they do not insist on having one-half, or at least some of the appointees chosen from among their nation, but liberally elect all, without exception, from the Gentile party, a concession altogether unintelligible in the adverse theory.

In fact, the Church of Jerusalem seems to have been composed of all elements, although we know that the Jewish was strongly predominant. We see there no well-marked sign of a strict Hebrew community, in the sense of the Tübingen school; but, on the contrary, a large spirit of benevolence and charity, ready to forget self, and attend only to the needs of others; chiefly do we perceive in it an indulgent readiness to listen to complaints when they are just, and to correct abuses as soon as they are made known.

But, to come back more pointedly to the subject of this particular chapter: the conversion of the Jews, which promised so well, at the beginning, soon became less rapid; and the spectacle of the first days never appears to have been repeated. In so large a city as Jerusalem the number of Christians continued forever to be only a small minority; and thus the city of David could not become a center in the new Dispensation. It was but the result announced, long before, by the prophets, and by none more explicitly than by Isaias, and thus the first general effort of all the apostles together became,

in the human sense, a failure. This carried with it two tremendous consequences, which cannot be mentioned here but briefly. The first was the destruction of Jerusalem in a near future; and the second, a long delay for the conversion of the Eastern world. Had the Jews been less obstinate; had they opened their eyes to the prodigies they had lately witnessed, and continued to listen to Peter and his fellow-apostles, their regeneration would have, no doubt, averted the doom of the city and the nation, as the fate of Nineveh had been reversed by the preaching of Jonah. Thus Jerusalem would have become the center of the new religion, as she had been of the old; and the Eastern world, so near to her geographically and morally, would have, probably, been the first to profit *en masse* by the Christian revelation. To show the importance the apostles attached to it, it is sufficient to mention the fact that they gave to it the first ten years of their ministry, and consecrated to it consequently nearly one-half of their missionary life. This, at least, can be deduced from the safest records of chronology.

As soon as it was ascertained that the mass of the nation was proof against all possible apostolic zeal, the city was left to the care of the bishop previously appointed. This happened to be an apostle, James, son of Alpheus or Cleophas. For it was proper the Jerusalem bishop should have authority over all Judeo-Christian communities, wherever any of them should be founded; and consequently he was to have a universal jurisdiction, although confined himself to one spot. He must, therefore, be an apostle, not a simple bishop.

James was a cousin of our Lord, known in after times under the name of James the Less, to distinguish him from the brother of St. John, the son of Zebedee. To him the fate of the city was, we may say, attached. He foresaw, and witnessed most of all her misfortunes, and died, a martyr, two years only before her destruction. To his violent death Josephus, his contemporary, ascribes the doom of Jerusalem, as a punishment for the shedding of his blood. The Jewish writer was not enlightened enough to know the real crime which was the cause of that awful catastrophe.

It is proper we should examine apart this noble Hebrew figure, so shamefully misrepresented by some pretended Christians of our day.

It cannot be denied that serious difficulties have arisen with respect to the identification of *James*, son of *Alpheus*, one of the twelve, with *James*, the brother or cousin of our Lord, the first bishop of Jerusalem. Several very respectable ecclesiastical authors

have thought they were two different persons ; the Bollandist collection \* can be consulted on the subject. We follow the commonly received opinion, which is certainly supported by the best authorities. All agree that even if he was not one of the primitive twelve, yet he was truly an apostle, solemnly consecrated to that office ; so that the total number of them, including St. Paul, amounted in fact to fourteen.

Among the fragments of the *Ecclesiastical History* of Hegesippus, preserved by Eusebius, precious details are given of his life. "He had been sanctified from the womb of his mother. He never tasted wine or any intoxicating beverage ; never indulged in animal food ; no razor ever touched his locks nor his beard ; and he denied himself all his life the use of oil as an ointment, and of the bath, so much needed in the climate of Palestine. His sanctity had obtained for him the privilege of entering the Holy of Holies in the Temple. So continuous was his prayer, that callousness had stiffened his knees, as is often the case with camels." Scaliger, of course, and many other Protestant writers, have tried to throw ridicule on such particularities as these ; but the Jews of the time of James, saw in them proofs of a sincerity of devotion which excited their wonder. Consequently he was all his life a favorite with the people, and until near his end, a man respected even by the chiefs of the Synagogue. Josephus agrees with this.

Several passages of the Gospel speak of the "brothers," or rather relatives of Christ, as "not believing in him ;" † as "indifferent to him ;" ‡ even on one occasion they appeared to consider his zeal as the effect of madness, and wanted to restrain him by force. § But it must be evident that if James was the son of Alpheus, as we believe, with the greatest number of ecclesiastical authors, he was none of those men, since he constantly followed the Saviour. In the contrary supposition, we cannot, perhaps, speak so positively, yet even in this last opinion, he was certainly a disciple of Christ at the moment of his death, since we see him directly after among the apostles. In all probability, therefore, the texts of the New Testament quoted above, cannot have any reference to him. He could not be among the relatives of Christ who did not believe in him.

From this time forward his personality and character are well described in the New Testament ; and he constantly appears as a

\* 1<sup>o</sup> *Matt.*

† *John*, vii.

‡ *Matt. xii.*

§ *Mark*, iii.

friend of St. Paul ; never opposed to him and his ministry. When the Apostle of the Gentiles, three years after his conversion, went to Jerusalem, he found, it is true, some difficulty in being received as a brother, on account of having been formerly one of the worst persecutors of the Church.\* Barnabas then introduced him to Peter,† with whom he dwelt in intimacy fifteen days ; and he saw at that time no other apostle except "James, the brother of the Lord."‡ Holy Scripture, always plain in its language, does not intimate in the least that this last meeting was not friendly ; on the contrary, we cannot but conclude that Peter having shared his lodging with Paul such a length of time, James, always attached sincerely to Peter, became also a friend of the new apostle.

Fourteen years later, Paul went again to Jerusalem, and this time the dislike experienced against him by the Judeo-Christians of the city was not so much caused by the fear of the bloody instrument of the Synagogue, as for the stand he had taken in preaching to the Gentiles, whose care Christ had particularly intrusted him with. And who, then, became his friends ? who refused to listen to the accusations brought certainly against him by "false brothers," as he calls them ?§ None else but "James, and Cephas, and John, who were visibly the columns of the Church."|| These gave him the "hand of fellowship," and recognized him as sent "*ad Gentes*."

Hence, whenever James is mentioned by St. Paul himself, it is to acknowledge his fairness and justice, and to claim his friendship as that of one of the "columns of the Church." Any one acquainted with the character of the first bishop of Jerusalem knows not only the austerity of his life, but the straightforwardness of his conduct on all occasions. Particularly was this evident at the Council of Jerusalem, when he spoke so openly in favor of the right of the Gentile converts not to be burdened with the obligation of observing the Mosaic law. But all those circumstances are directly forgotten, for the simple pruriency of making "the brother of the Lord" a carnal Jew, a harsh disciplinarian in that regard, and even —let us say the word—a hypocrite, speaking fair openly, and protesting by his acts of his indulgent disposition, and charitable inclinations ; yet remaining in secret a hardened Hebrew, enemy to conciliation and forbearance, sending spies on Peter, to have the

\* Gal. i. 18, 19.

§ Gal. ii. 4.

† Acts, ix. 27.

|| Ib. 9.

‡ Gal. i. 19.

pleasure of finding him at fault, and of reproving him for his condescension to the Gentiles. And all this merely because St. Paul relates\* that men had been sent by St. James to Peter at Antioch ; and among them some found fault with the apostle because occasionally he dined with Gentile people. What authority have the modern critics for stating that those "men had been sent" by James as spies on Peter ? Could the bishop of Jerusalem have no other reason for conferring by messengers with his fellow-apostle (the first among the twelve) but to examine secretly his conduct, and have it reported to him ? Because the especial motive of the embassy is not stated, is it just to attribute it to such low purposes as these ? If some of the messengers of James were harsh Judeo-Christians, and apt to find fault with every slight infraction of the Mosaic law, is it fair to infer that James shared in the feeling ? If ever a report was made to him on the subject, when his envoys returned, we know not what answer he made ; we know not if he did not reprove them severely for their over-zeal, and their harsh suspicions. Nay, we must conclude that he did so, in conformity with his well-known character, and his open custom of liberally treating the questions naturally raised between the Judeo-Christians and the Gentile converts. This is, we think, the proper way of judging a man ; and to affix to his character any stigma not better supported than in this case, is not only to repudiate the ethics of the Christian, but likewise to renounce the valid claims to the name of a sound historian and critic.

It is important to say a few words on this opposition of some Judeo-Christians toward the Gentile converts ; an opposition most unjustly transferred to the apostles themselves. A fair study of the *Acts* and the *Epistles* will convince every unprejudiced reader that if ever there was, on the subject, among the apostles, any divergence of opinion, it was but slight. If, before the controversy was decided—namely, as early as the epoch of the Council of Jerusalem—there had been among those "who seemed to be something," as St. Paul says,† some grave dissensions, there is not a particle of evidence that these words referred to the apostles themselves ; since whenever he names them it is with praise, and his only cause of disagreement with Peter at Antioch cannot morally be called "a grave dissension." But it cannot be denied that among the Jewish converts

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\* Gal. ii. 12.

† Gal. ii. 6.

there was a strong party, which has unfairly been called the "Petrine party," and which was merely the first root of Ebionism. St. Paul speaks of it frequently, and the history of the early Church cannot be justly appreciated, unless this is taken into consideration. This, in fact, was altogether unavoidable, since the Church must of necessity have a human element; and men will have naturally their passions, even when advocating what they call the cause of justice and right. The best proof, after all, of the divine element in the Church, is that the human passions were always in the end overcome; and nothing can show it better than the very question we examine.

This is the case in all its simplicity: All the apostles were Jews; their first disciples belonged to the same nation; in the first Church founded by them the same Hebrew element predominated to such a degree that many men in our day see among them only Jews. But the apostles had been commissioned by their Master "to teach all nations;" they had to "preach salvation to the Gentiles;" all tribes and races had been promised to the Saviour as "an inheritance," etc., etc. They could not fulfill their mission without forming a moral whole of the universe, without bringing all peoples to a kind of uniformity, and consequently imparting to them and inducing them to receive and adopt the same religious, social, and moral ideas. The original project itself required this absolutely. Men cannot have the same religion unless they form together a real society; and this condition cannot be satisfied by mere names. To form a moral aggregation, they must adopt with sincerity ideas, customs, purposes, in common; and understand all these things in precisely the same way, so as to attach to them absolutely the same meaning.

Evidently, humanly speaking, this is absolutely impossible, when it is understood of the whole world. No one had ever tried it before. What Rome endeavored to bring about was far from being strictly the same; and Rome extended her system only to less than one-fourth of mankind, and her partial success lasted scarcely two or three centuries; then came a break-down.

The strange trial, however, is attempted by twelve uneducated men; they are at work. What do they find as soon as they have gathered a first congregation at Jerusalem? Even there, almost the day after the conversion of eight thousand people, when all have "one heart and one soul;" they find out that among them there are

“Hellenist converts,” who complain that their widows in the charitable “distributions” are not treated as well as the Jewish widows. Peter meanwhile makes missionary excursions; baptizes at Cæsarea the first Roman pagan he meets willing to follow Christ; goes to Antioch, where he finds himself obliged to dine with Greek converts—for Antioch is altogether a Greek city. And directly there is a fearful commotion among the Christians of all the districts as yet evangelized; such a commotion that the wise German hermeneutists exclaim: “There must have been a Petrine and a Pauline party.” We merely say that if the Holy Spirit had not been present in the Church, there would have been as many parties as there were heads.

What will happen when the Gospel is preached not only to the Jews of Jerusalem, to the few Romans of Cæsarea, or to the numerous Greeks of Antioch; but likewise to the Phœnicians of Tyre, to the descendants of the Philistines in Azotus, to the Syrians of Damascus and Nisibis, to the Arabians of Bostra, to the Egyptians of Hermopolis, to the Chaldeans of Babylon, and to the Persians of Susa, to speak only of the East? Any one who thinks that success was probable, humanly speaking, cannot possibly have reflected on the subject; and looking only at the much more simple case before us, it is clear to us that Christianity, if reduced to human wisdom and help, would never have extended farther than the narrow limits of Palestine, if even there.

But looking more closely to the facts, the conviction can scarcely be resisted that the harsh Jewish feeling which certainly had invaded a part of the lay element in the Church, and merged itself gradually into Ebionism, could not, consequently, but be opposed by James of Jerusalem, so that no apostle ever shared in those extreme antipathies against the Gentiles. The history of Ebionism has been lately elucidated by several German writers, chiefly by Gieseler and Credner.\* The most probable opinion is that a certain number of Christians who left Jerusalem when the Roman army arrived with Vespasian, and withdrew to Pella, were strongly imbued with extreme ideas against St. Paul and his doctrine of Christian freedom from the law. They had been kept quiet by the authority of St. James as long as he lived, but after his martyrdom, they broke out openly, and became in fact the first heretics, by refusing to acknowledge any

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\* The chief authorities are St. Irenæus (lib. 1); Epiphanius (hær. 19, 29, 30); and Jerome (in Matt. xii.—ad Esaiam 1, 12—Catal. Script., c. 3).

longer the divinity of Christ ; they placed Moses above him. They took the name of Ebionites, which signifies "poor" in Hebrew ; not from any leader, as it was for a long time believed, but on account of their profession of poverty as resulting from the first organization of the Church at Jerusalem. They hated St. Paul, and would not have anything to do with the Gentiles, although they called themselves Christians. According to a fragment of Hegesippus, preserved by Eusebius, it seems also they were greatly dissatisfied at the election of Simeon, as bishop of Jerusalem, after the death of James ; and a schismatic intruder of the name of Thebuthis, whom they had wished for chief pastor, became probably their leader in Peræa. There they united themselves with what remained of the Essenes after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the sect continued until the end of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century, when it entirely disappeared.

This is the simple truth concerning the pretended "Petrine party." No one in his senses can imagine that St. Peter had ever any leaning to it ; and as to St. James, who occupies us chiefly at this time, it seems sure that he had kept the party down at Jerusalem as long as he lived ; and we have no doubt that one of the greatest troubles and anxieties of this good and holy man was to see a part of his flock imbued with notions which he could not but anticipate would involve the loss of many souls. As he had been all his life a faithful observer of the Mosaic law, as he went farther even, and imposed upon himself austerities which the law did not prescribe, he wished to continue to do personally what he had done before the day of Pentecost, what he had seen our divine Lord do all his life ; and who could blame him ? When he was placed at the head of the Church of Jerusalem, the great majority of—perhaps all—the members of his flock wished to do the same with respect to Mosaic observances, and he did not offer any objection ; can there be anything surprising in this ? The Synagogue was to be buried with honor, as the Fathers of the Church subsequently said.

But James was as moderate and tender for others as he was austere and harsh toward himself. Hence, when the question which was already convulsing the new Church, came to be discussed by the twelve, and it was his turn to speak on the subject, what did he say ? "Simon hath told us in what manner God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people to his name ; and to this agree the words of the prophets. . . . To the Lord is known his own

work from the beginning of the world. Wherefore, I judge that they, who from among the Gentiles are converted to God, are not to be disquieted. But that we write to them that they refrain themselves from the pollution of idols, and from fornication," etc.

St. James, in the quotation which, for the sake of brevity, was omitted, refers to Amos ;\* but, as he adds directly after : "To the Lord is known his own work from the beginning of the world," he had, no doubt, in his mind the long series of prophecies on the same subject, a part of which was commented upon in a previous chapter. Other texts from St. Peter, St. Paul, etc., show conclusively that the apostles were well acquainted with the oracles of the Old Testament regarding the future conversion of the world ; and they knew that the time of fulfillment had arrived, and the Gentiles were going to be called to the knowledge of the true God. Yet we see with some surprise that many Protestant writers suppose that the idea of universality grew insensibly in the mind of the apostles, as if, at first, they imagined that their work was to be confined to the Jews. Dean Milman is conspicuous among these. In his *History of Christianity to the Extinction of Paganism*, he asserts repeatedly that the thought of extending the field of their labor was suggested by various incidents which he mentions ; and the very words of the Saviour when he sent them "to teach all nations," never came to his mind, or he must suppose that the apostles had entirely forgotten them. Thus the *History of Christianity* is made a work of chance, or of human ingenuity ; and the splendid providential scheme developed so majestically in the pages of the Old and the New Testament, is entirely ignored in works which have the pretension of giving in full the history of it. They merely say that these " pretended prophecies " were " Jewish notions " which the Christian apostles adopted in " after times."

But the chief circumstance which must attract our attention in this place, is the moderation and true Christian spirit with which St. James, in the Council of Jerusalem, spoke of the relations of the Gentiles to the new covenant. "They were not to be disquieted," but must be received without obliging them to keep the burdensome precepts of the Mosaic ordinances. Yet, in spite of so clear a language, he is placed by modern German "theologians" at the head of the harsh Judeo-Christian party, out of which Ebionism arose.

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\* Amos, ix. 11.

This suffices to justify our previous surmises on the way James understood his ministry, and on the moderation of his character.

It seems even that a good number of the Jews who formed the Church of Jerusalem were likewise men of a temperate and true Christian disposition, since all ancient authors agree that the violent commotion in which James lost his life arose among the non-Christian Israelites, on account of the multitude of new converts he made, which it seems threatened the Synagogue with a complete desertion. This large increase of the Church under his ministration supposes that he found among his countrymen a number of spirits congenial to himself, and ready to accept the decree of the Council of Jerusalem, which he certainly enforced, since he had promoted its definition, and signed it. This circumstance must, in our eyes, limit considerably the Ebionite party.

The popular rising against him is described in a most graphic manner in contemporary authors. The Bollandists\* quote at length passages from the ecclesiastical history of Hegesippus preserved by Eusebius; and, in the twentieth book of his *Antiquities*, Josephus, who was the contemporary of St. James, attributes openly the destruction of Jerusalem, which followed soon after, to the just wrath of Heaven on account of his death. The authors of the *Acta Sanctorum* had in their time to vindicate these precious historical fragments from the objections of Scaliger; and they did it victoriously. But the same spirit of ultra-criticism is now alive more than ever; and under its baneful influence a complete historical skepticism becomes in our day more and more rampant. In our actual researches we meet it at every moment; and on this account it seems proper to indulge in a few short reflections on the subject.

## 2. *On Criticism in general, and German or English Criticism in particular.*

Criticism, either philological or historical, was almost unknown to antiquity. Varro, among the Romans, was nearly the only known author who attempted it, without, however, following any well-determined rule; and his etymologies of the Latin language are known to have been often most fanciful, owing to his *patriotic* determination to exclude entirely the Greek as a source of derivation. Plato, long before him, had tried the same for Hellenic words, and in many of

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\* 1<sup>o</sup> Maii.

his dialogues he often excites our smile by the simplicity of his grammatical science. It can be said that philological, which in due time brought in historical, criticism was born in the Christian Church. The necessity of having a pure text of the Holy Scriptures, on which so much depends, required very early the use of both kinds of researches, either for ascertaining and fixing the canon of Holy Writ, and distinguishing the inspired writings from the numerous literary fabrications of previous times ; or for determining the purity of the text, and writing new versions on which the Christians might rely. The labors of Origen and St. Jerome are well known in both respects ; and since their time the Fathers of the Church, Latin or Greek, have never neglected this branch of ecclesiastical studies. A way was thus opened to a new science, destined to benefit in a great degree the large fields of history and philology. In the middle ages chairs of Oriental languages were established in all the universities, and the study of the Bible and of linguistics was considerably benefited by such institutions as these. It must not be denied, however, that the simplicity and guilelessness of the period gave rise to a most deplorable perversion of history. Not that it was intended, and came from a zeal which did not recoil at forgery and hypocrisy—accusations of this kind, indulged in by many modern authors, are altogether groundless, and easily ascertained to be so by the mere reading of those books, so full of candor and artlessness. But it is sure that no reliance can be placed in many statements of mediæval writers with respect to anterior times. As to contemporaneous events, they are justly esteemed in our day as offering a perfect picture of their epoch ; and this alone ought to free them from any unjust supposition, when they write so many strange things which they pretend to have happened before them, or at a great distance, if there is question of recent affairs.

Criticism, always fostered by the Church, made at last immense forward strides in the seventeenth century, when strict rules were finally adopted and laid down, for judging accurately of anterior events, or of the authenticity of books and the correctness of texts. And undeniably it is, above all, in the bosom of the Catholic Church that authors of this kind appeared first in great number, and acquired immediately an immense authority in the field of letters. Protestant criticism, being then always polemical, indulged often in rather queer antics, as Bossuet shows so well in his *Histoire des Variations*.

Our present purpose regards only the historical branch of the subject ; and every well-informed person surely, at this time, appreciates the labors in that field of the Benedictines and Jesuits in France, the Bollandists in Belgium, and the numerous writers, belonging either to the secular or regular clergy, in Italy, such as Muratori, Mansi, the brothers Ballerini, and Tiraboschi. Not so much could be expected from the Catholic writers of Germany, at that time convulsed by religious polemics, and nothing could be hoped from England or Ireland, groaning under the yoke of the penal laws. An exception also is to be made with regard to some very rash critics in France, belonging to the school of Launoy.

But at the beginning of this century a new school of criticism in history arose in Germany, which can justly be called the "skeptical school." Whilst Niebuhr attacked Livy and many other ancient writers, Eichorn established new rules of criticism, whose object was evidently to undermine the whole fabric of ecclesiastical history, or rather of Christianity. His boldness placed him immediately at the head of a large following, among whom Paulus became soon conspicuous, particularly by laying in his *Life of Jesus* the foundation of those of Strauss and of Renan.

All those pretended critical rules start from the supposition that there is nothing supernatural in the Christian religion, or rather in any religion whatever. As, in the opinion of the writers, God never acted directly on the intellectual or physical world, there cannot be any real revelation, any genuine prophecies or miracles. This once admitted—and it is the very question at issue, which thus does not seem to them worthy of a further investigation—the following rules are laid down with profound solemnity as the last dictates of the human intellect : First, The Old Testament is only a collection of Jewish literary works, devoid of inspiration ; and the same must be asserted of the New. Secondly, With respect to the authenticity of each of these books, the intrinsic characters are the only decisive ones : extrinsic considerations are but secondary. Thirdly, The prophecies which foretell remote events must be all pronounced apocryphal, and were written either directly before the things happened, or shortly after. Fourthly, Whatever is miraculous either has been misunderstood, or was reported incorrectly to the writers, or, what is worse, was purposely invented ; and, in this last case, is a proof that the book must be altogether rejected.

The whole of this can be resumed in a single phrase : Faith must

be subjected to reason, which cannot admit anything supernatural and divine. It is evident that these remarkable critical rules leave a fair field to all rationalists, and a poor chance to any writer desirous of vindicating the glorious titles of Christianity ; and because no Christian can admit them, all believers in revelation are directly accused of forfeiting their rights to human reason, and of blindly accepting that which cannot be proved. Is it not the first duty of reason to accept whatever is clearly divine, and to believe what has been undoubtedly revealed ? The rational proofs of revelation and of the action of God in the universe are not so weak and contemptible as to be thus summarily rejected without a shadow of evidence, merely because it pleases the new critics to say so. Many men of greater genius than any of them are, have firmly believed that the supernatural foundations of Christianity are rationally incontrovertible ; and were convinced that they had not only faith, but even reason, on their side. On the side of German criticism there is only fancy.

This last word characterizes perfectly the result of the celebrated *second rule* mentioned above. By relying only on what they call the intrinsic characters of historical writings, and relegating behind, or rather setting altogether aside—as they really do—the extrinsic proofs, they come finally to this : that whatever a fertile imagination can invent, or an ingenious literary manipulation can insinuate, becomes directly irrefragable evidence, and must be admitted as final ; whilst the sensible reasons suggested by sound erudition and profound scholarship, are either altogether ignored, or cursorily mentioned only when they appear to chime in with their fancies. In this there is an essential difference between the Catholic critics of the seventeenth century and the German rationalists of the nineteenth. The first pay attention to all characters, either intrinsic or not ; the second to the first *only*, understood as their imagination or prejudices dictate.

But what must particularly make impression on all sensible men is the dreadful abyss which opens under the feet of those more than imprudent writers. Their cold and desponding criticism leads them directly to the extreme of unbelief and atheism ; and the universities of Tubingen and Jena, where Eichorn, Paulus, and their disciples taught or wrote, became the first teeming hot-beds where all the modern anti-social and irreligious doctrines grew up like noxious weeds, to poison Europe, and later on mankind. This rank vegeta-

tion is now growing over the whole soil of England, choking every day more and more the few blades of pure wheat remaining yet among the tares.

This will explain the unwavering perseverance with which we intend to pursue the vagaries of this most irrational and fatal school, whenever we meet it in our way. There has been already an occasion to say a word of it, on the subject of the pretended opposition between the book of St. Luke and the epistles of St. Paul. The life of St. James brings again the matter before us; and many other cases of this kind will present themselves as showing the unsubstantial character of the delusion.

The holy bishop of Jerusalem had, during his life, written an epistle, "To the twelve tribes which are dispersed." He fulfilled in it a duty inherent to his character as the apostle of all Judeo-Christian communities. From the contents of the letter, it is manifest that the Jews, to whom he addressed it, thought they were Christians only because they believed that Jesus was a Messiah of earthly glory, and would render them happy in this world, beyond which they scarcely raised their eyes. Thus Jesus was not for them, above all, a moral teacher, a pattern, a source of grace; they placed the glory of Christ in exterior circumstances.\* The Messiah was not to destroy the pride of rank, but on the contrary to consecrate it, as he was to be himself a Prince. The rich would be exalted above the poor. Thus they did not believe that as Christians they must, above all, fulfill the evangelical law; but they thought they could be saved only by faith in Jesus, in the sense just indicated. James shows them their mistake, and his short epistle is so strong an argument against the fundamental principle of Lutheranism, that the monk of Vittembergh refused to receive it in his canon of the Scriptures, and called it an "epistle of straw." The modern German exegetists do not seem to care much for the foremost principle of Luther; but attach, evidently, a great importance to the "essential difference between the Pauline and Petrine theologies." In their opinion the Epistle of James is written altogether according to the views of Peter, and entirely opposed to those of Paul, who, they say, relies absolutely on *faith* and depreciates the *law*. They do not consider that the *faith* and the *law* of which St. James speaks, are absolutely distinct from those treated of by St. Paul, and thus no

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\* Jac. ii. 1.

opposition between them can be argued from the use of these words. The first bishop of Jerusalem wished his countrymen not to rely absolutely on the *faith* in Jesus as the Jewish earthly Messiah ; but to join to that belief the practice of *his law*, namely, the moral precepts of the Gospel. St. Paul, on the other side, wished the Christians to have *faith* in Jesus as the Redeemer, the moral pattern of men and the source of grace, which includes consequently the law of the Gospel, and not to attach any importance to the practice of the Mosaic ordinances—which he always calls emphatically *the law*—because they did not really bind them. The “dispersed Jews,” therefore, who read the Epistle of St. James, understood the words *faith* and *law* very differently from the Romans and Galatians, who perused the epistles of St. Paul, where the same words have a completely different meaning. Consequently both apostles were perfectly right, and there was not the least divergence in their “theologies.” Thus nothing becomes more simple than the solution of this question. Yet it is incredible what amount of useless discussion has been gone through in Germany and in England lately, on a subject which has detained us so short a time, and yet must be considered as finally decided, since the difficulty is reduced to mere logomachy.

During the whole time that St. James had the Judeo-Christians under his care, the nation was in the highest state of excitement. Having put Christ to death, persecuted his apostles, and rejected his doctrine, they were left to the wild guidance of their passions. That portentous history must be read to understand the fate of guilty nations when God thinks proper to punish them. In no other case perhaps was so completely fulfilled the remarkable Latin adage : *quos vult perdere Deus dementat*. The reader is referred to the pages of Josephus, and of the Christian writers of the following century, or rather to his own remembrance ; for we do not believe any one in our age has been, when young, so devoid of curiosity, as to neglect reading all the details of these preternatural events. At the time of the martyrdom of James the last stage of it had already been reached, although certainly the greatest excesses of fury and madness among the Jews happened during the siege of Jerusalem, when James was no more. But we can imagine the position of the pastor of their souls when day after day news of their rebellions against the Romans came from every country where they had formed establishments, rebellions always followed by massacres and destruction. This

was in fact the case during the whole life and apostleship of the holy man. He must have felt happy to expire under the blows of the club plied on his skull by a wretched fuller, because it put an end to his long trials, and saved him from witnessing the horrors he would have had under his eyes a couple of years later.

After his death Simeon, probably his brother, became his successor as bishop of Jerusalem, and died a martyr under Trajan, according to Hegesippus, quoted by Eusebius. Twelve other Judeo-Christian bishops succeeded each other after Simeon until Hadrian ; when a new and more complete destruction of Jerusalem extinguished entirely Christianity in the place of its birth, at least for a time. No Jew was henceforth permitted to reside in the city of David, whose name even was changed to that of *Ælia*. Cæsarea then became the Christian metropolis of Palestine, and it seemed as if Jerusalem was forever blotted out from further Church annals.

It was only gradually that a few Gentile-Christians came to live on the ruins of the former cradle of religion ; and for their spiritual guidance a new line of Christian bishops was inaugurated, entirely distinct from the first, because the prohibition for people of the Jewish race to dwell in the district continued to be strictly enforced. The greatest number of these new pastors were Greeks, a few names appear to be Persian or Syriac ; and although the General Council of Nice restored later on to the Church of Jerusalem something of its former dignity, it had forever ceased to be the center of the other Judeo-Christian communities, which in due time disappeared altogether.

The foregoing details as to the succession of bishops in the See of Jerusalem are taken mainly from Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. Modern non-Catholic writers consider all this information as altogether unreliable. The early documents of the Christian religion, either in the East or in the West, are regarded by them as perfectly untrustworthy. At first they relied yet on what is contained in the New Testament ; but all other ancient writings, and those of Hegesippus in particular—who lived in the second century—were scarcely thought to be worthy of respect. In this, our own time, the pages of the New Testament itself are subjected to the same inexorable criticism. For these writers there is no sure history of the infant Church but what issues from their speculations, which, according to Mr. Matthew Arnold, one of them, in the *Contemporary Review* for March, 1875, “are addressed to those inclined to reject the Bible, and

to attribute to its personages and documents not too much authority, but too little."\* This is at least candid ; and a few lines above, the same author had expressed himself with the same "honesty" and plain speaking : "This conclusion"—that miracles do not really happen—"we suppose our reader to have had forced upon him by his own reflection and experience ; therefore he does not require to have it demonstrated to him as a case of complete induction, nor indeed do we believe that it can be so demonstrated, or that it can be irresistibly pressed upon any mind which has not been led to it by its own experience and reflection." Expressed more pointedly, this last prescription of "criticism" comes to this : Any one who has convinced himself by dint of hard thinking that 'miracles do not really happen,' cannot grant any authority to the Bible or the New Testament. For such an one there is no need of discussion whatever. Another man, not so convinced, could not probably be brought to feel the strength of arguments against miracles ; because we 'do not believe that a strict demonstration on the subject is possible ; and in this last case likewise, there is nothing more to say on the subject ; each one is to be left to his conviction.' This is a much more compendious way than the one furnished by the *rules* of Eichorn. The necessary consequence of it is a complete indifference and skepticism, and consequently unbelief, in regard to all kinds of Christian history. It comes to this : believe anything acceptable to your reason ; reject everything else, whatever the most respectable documents may say.

The author of *Literature and Dogma* declares that thus "the reader is practically in the same position when he has read and accepted our half dozen lines about the composition of the Gospels, as when he has read the volume and a half devoted to it in *Supernatural Religion*. For the result is the same : that the record of the sayings and doings of Jesus, when we first get it, has passed through at least half a century or more of oral tradition, and through more than one written account. So, too, he is practically in the same position when he has read and accepted our half dozen pages about miracles, as when he has read the half volume in which the author of *Supernatural Religion* professes to establish a complete induction against them. For the result is in both cases the same ; that miracles do not really happen."

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\* Page 502.

Mr. Arnold thinks, therefore, that he has benefited mankind by finding out the most compendious and sure way to disbelief. What the two ponderous volumes of *Supernatural Religion*—the last word of rationalism—have done to prove that the canon of the New Testament—“the record of the sayings and doings of Jesus”—is unreliable, and that “miracles do not really happen,” the author of *Literature and Dogma* has obtained in six lines with respect to the first incubus—the New Testament canon—and in six pages for the second—the Gospel miracles. We do not intend to speak here of this last prodigious feat, as the question of miracles does not come properly before us at this stage of our inquiry; but we must dispatch in a page or two the first boast of Mr. Arnold, which falls precisely in the line of our present investigations.

It cannot be denied that he has taken a deal of trouble in his researches about the Gospel canon, where he certainly shows sincerity and candor; but he might have saved himself all this labor had he consulted some good Catholic writer on the subject. Nothing of what he says is new to all well-informed students of hermeneutics among us. His *discoveries* are certainly a hard nut to crack to Protestant exegetists, who, rejecting the authority of the Church as a “teacher,” are reduced to the Bible as the only “rule of faith.” Mr. Arnold proves that their “rule of faith”—the canon of the New Testament—was not firmly established before the fifth century; that the Four Gospels of our canon were first mentioned clearly by Irenæus about the year 180 of our era; and that the manuscript of Bobbio, discovered by Muratori, and published by him in 1740, carries us back to an age a little higher than that of Irenæus.\* He moreover proves that the canon of the *Old Testament* was well established for the Apostolic Fathers, who had received it from the Synagogue; but they never refer to that of the *New*, because, forsooth, it was not yet fixed. All this we approve, and Catholic writers

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\* In a fifth article on “Objections to *Literature and Dogma*,” contained in the *Contemporary Review*, for May, 1875, we find other discoveries of Mr. Arnold of passages of the fourth gospel, quoted by writers anterior to St. Irenæus, for which we ought to be thankful, as they highly corroborate the belief in the existence of it at all times, so far back as St. John himself. Thus he proves that Theophilus of Antioch “undeniably quoted the fourth gospel as St. John’s” in 180—Justin Martyr in his *Apology*, written in the year 147, gives several texts, taken evidently from the same holy record. In the *Philosophumena*, written, it is believed, by Hippolytus, under Pope Zephyrinus in 200, a passage of a lost work of the Gnostic Basileides is quoted, taken from the same gospel without possibility of a doubt, and Basileides wrote not later than

had stated it long ago. The same must be said likewise of the incorrectness of the quotations from the New Testament by the Fathers of the two or three first centuries ; the true text had not yet been ascertained, and was in fact established only by the labors of Origen and St. Jerome, confirmed and consecrated by the whole Church at Nice, perhaps, and in subsequent councils certainly. All this is perfectly true, and extremely damaging to the Protestant cause. But the Catholics are not surprised at it, since they know that the Church during the first sixty years of her existence did not yet possess any approved “records ;” that the divine Saviour had not commanded his apostles to write anything ; and that when they did write, it was merely to answer to the wants of the moment, or by an after-thought to subserve the cause of religion itself by a clear and succinct statement of the great facts of redemption.

With all this we are far from accepting the conclusion of Mr. Arnold, expressed in these words : “the record of the sayings and doings of Jesus, when we first get it, has passed through at least half a century or more of oral tradition, and through more than one written account.” The inference from this phrase is naturally that the gospels, as we have them, do not convey surely the words of the apostles ; and as he gives elsewhere to understand that the apostles were so far below Jesus as to be unable to understand him fully, the sure consequence is that we have not in the gospels the exact doctrine of the Master, even when we find in them the words of the apostles. These two statements would be sufficient to subvert Christianity, root and branch ; but both are untrue, and very few words will prove it.

Firstly, “the record of the sayings and doings of Jesus, when we first get it,”—a little earlier than the year 180 of our era—had *not* passed “through at least half a century or more of oral tradition.” Mr. Arnold did not use this word—oral—unadvisedly ; but, as he

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125—in the same *Philosophumena* mention is made of the Naasseni or Ophites, as “repeatedly using, in illustration of their doctrines, the same fourth gospel.” Several of those texts are quoted by Mr. Arnold. But the Naasseni or Ophites were a Jewish sect of gnostics who preceded the Greek gnostics, and consequently went up certainly to apostolic times, before the death of St. John. Finally, both from the pseudo Clementines and St. Ignatius’ Epistles, proofs are given that the same holy book existed in their time. St. Ignatius was put to death in 115, and he was a disciple of St. John ; and the greatest argument of those who reject the gospel of the beloved disciple is that Ignatius does not speak of it. All these admissions are certainly remarkable, and an honorable mention ought in justice to be made of them.

wished to condense into "half a dozen lines" his demonstration of the unreliability of the four gospels, he became, necessarily, "obscure," as Horace remarks it: "*brevis esse labore obscurus fit.*" He seems, however, to us, under correction, to mean really that the "doings and sayings of Jesus" were at first delivered "orally," before they were "recorded," and that the narrative went through "half a century or more of oral tradition" before it was written down. To this statement we strongly object. Mr. Arnold acknowledges himself, that in the time of Irenæus, about the year 180 of our era, they were certainly written down, and the several narratives were attributed to the four evangelists under whose names they yet appear in our day; he confesses, even, that according to the Bobbio manuscript the same was the case "a little earlier than Irenæus." But these two certain data do not in the least suppose that until the year 180 or a little earlier, "oral tradition" alone had preserved the gospel narrative. From the plain statement of Irenæus and of the Bobbio manuscript, it is manifest that the names of the evangelists were known anteriorly. It was not a discovery of the day. But the ordinary life of many individuals, which can be very well said to be seventy years or more, carries us back from Irenæus to the time when St. John was yet living at Ephesus. Many men could have known at the same time St. John and Irenæus. This enables us to state confidently that the four gospels had been written in apostolic times, if not by the very authors to whom the Catholic Church has always attributed them. There was for them, therefore, no time of mere "oral tradition."

It cannot be denied, it is true, that most probably many "sayings and doings of Jesus" which are not contained in our four gospels, were related "orally" by the apostles to their disciples; and St. Polycarp and St. Ignatius of Antioch may very well have heard from St. John incidents in the life of our Lord which we do not read in the "Fourth Gospel." But this cannot in the least render problematical the fact that the gospel narrative, of which we know from St. Irenæus and the Bobbio manuscript that it was already written earlier than the year 180, must have been "recorded" earlier than this epoch; since St. Irenæus speaks of the gospels as written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and thus most certainly during the life of many Christians living yet at the time of Irenæus—namely, when St. John was yet alive—they must have been known as the work of the Four Evangelists.

There is no proof whatever that the four gospels were ever kept only by "oral tradition;" and the statement of it by Mr. Arnold is a mere supposition, which his long studies on the subject, and all the variation of texts which he brings forward, cannot in the least substantiate. On this account, probably, he adds the strange words, "and through more than one written account," which seem to contradict openly his anterior hypothesis of an oral tradition, and requires some further comment. There were certainly as "many written accounts" of the gospels as there were copies; and since every Christian Church considered the New Testament as the greatest treasure after the Holy Eucharist, and kept it generally in the most sacred place of the churches together with the Blessed Sacrament, except in times of persecution, the number of copies must have been large indeed, and no books at the time could compare with them in the multiplicity of their editions. We are not here left to mere conjecture, and find curious details in the early history of the Donatists, which must not be altogether omitted. It is undoubtedly later than the year 180, but it was long before the canon of the New Testament was finally determined, and the customs then prevalent must have been in existence previously, with respect to the keeping in the church, and the preservation of the sacred books of the New Law.

One of the first incidents of the persecution of Diocletian was the injunction addressed to the Christian clergy, to deliver up to the agents of the government the sacred vessels and the Holy Scriptures; and at the end of the storm, in 305, a council of African bishops met at Cirtha in Numidia, to punish canonically those who had yielded to the temptation. It was proved that a great number of Donatist and a few Catholic bishops had been guilty of this crime; and they were thenceforth called *traditores*. Most of the details of this ecclesiastical trial have been preserved by St. Augustine in his work, *Contra Cresconium*, and in the "*Breviculus Collat, contra Donatistas*;" Optatus, of Mileva, likewise speaks on the same subject;\* and we can thus ascertain some curious and important facts relative to the books of the New Testament, chiefly the gospels. For it must be remarked that the Scriptures which the "traditores" delivered up to the magistrates, are called either *Domini Testamenta* or *Dominicæ Scripturæ*, which can only refer to the gospels, since

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\* Lib. 1.

in the writings of the early Fathers “*Dominus*” is always our Lord Jesus.

But how many copies of the gospels were ascertained in the Council of Cirtha to have thus been given up to the pagans? And how many more can we suppose existed at the time in that city? In the Proconsular Acts referred to by St. Augustine, we see that the Christian clergy, even among the Donatists, refused generally to give them up, or to declare where they could be found, except when they could not avoid the question by any subterfuge. Yet we find that on one single occasion, under Munatius Felix, the *Curator* of the *colonia Cirthensis*, Catulinus brought to the magistrate a very large *codex*, saying that the *lectores* had the others; Eugenius gave up four *codices*; Felix Sarsor, five; Victorinus, eight; Projectus, four large and two smaller ones. But when Munatius Felix came to Victor Grammaticus and received only two copies, with four *quinq̄iones*, he was surprised at this small number, yet had to be satisfied with the answer of Grammaticus, that he had none others. Coddeon did not answer to his name; but his wife presented six *codices*; Munatius, wishing to ascertain if she had more, the public slave Bovis, or rather Bos, was sent to inspect her house, and returned saying he could not see any other books.

Evidently this Roman *Curator* did not wish to be harsh on the Christians. Had he been so inclined he would not have been satisfied with such loose proceedings; and the Christian “*tradidores*” on their side, with the least good will, could then save their sacred books. In fact, only those inclined beforehand to obey the decree must have given them up; the smallest amount of attachment to the faith could then save them; and we have no doubt that a very small number, comparatively, were handed over to the pagans. We can, therefore, judge of the multitude of the gospels existing in manuscript in all villages and towns, at the beginning of the persecution of Diocletian, a very little more than a century after the year 180 of our era, when they are first mentioned to us by St. Irenæus. There can be no doubt in the mind of any one acquainted with the slow process of the establishment of such customs as this, that before the year of our Lord 180 many Christian churches possessed copies of the New Testament, and that consequently there were more than “one written account” of them, as Mr. Arnold justly says; he might have said there were hundreds of thousands.

But perhaps he meant to insinuate that each “written account”

differed essentially from all others; and in this case the author of *Literature and Dogma* would have done well to prove it. The only fact he mentions, that “the Fathers of the two first centuries, in their quotations of the four gospels, do not follow strictly the text we have, either Greek or Latin,” is not exactly a proof that the manuscripts differed essentially. In quoting from memory, as he acknowledges himself was often the case, the text is frequently altered in style, even should the thought be preserved; and we have to insist on this particularity of the first ages of Christianity that the rulers of the Church knew that they formed a “teaching” body; and tradition was then more relied upon as a rule of faith than Scripture, whose canon, with respect to the New Testament, had not yet been fully fixed. But if there were differences, we maintain that they were not of an essential character, as no list of the kind has ever yet been made and urged against us by rationalists. We moreover repeat again, on this occasion, that if some “sayings and doings of Jesus” may be found in the early Fathers, which are not contained in the four gospels, they came from private communications made by the apostles to their successors in office, but never contradict what the gospels themselves assert.

In this view, which the primitive “teachers” of our holy religion took of it, we have also the plain reason why the canon of the New Testament was so long forming. They did not think at first it was so necessary, chiefly as “the voice of the apostles was still resounding, as it were, and had not yet died away.” But when heretics began to flood the world with their false gospels, and spurious narratives, of which so many have been preserved to our very days, although many more have, no doubt, disappeared, then it became incumbent on those to whom the deposit of truth had been intrusted, to see that the faith of the simple people should not be circumvented by the enticing voice of error. Then the unanimity of the Church proved where truth was with respect to the genuineness of the Scriptures. It is very remarkable that after the Council of Nice, whose canons, however, such as we have them, do not contain anything on the subject, the sacred books of the New Testament were directly admitted as revealed, just as we have them. St. Athanasius is clear on that point, and we find no difference of opinion afterward among orthodox Greek writers. St. Jerome, on whom Mr. Arnold writes a strong paragraph adverse apparently to us, has, we think, not been understood by him, because the author of *Literature and Dogma* has

no exact knowledge of the authority of the Church in such questions as these. It is perfectly true that the great translator of the Bible in Latin—St. Jerome—states that various books of the New Testament were not admitted in his time by a certain number of Christians, even Catholics; the Church had not then pronounced on those questions, and every one was allowed to follow his opinion. But St. Jerome himself, as Mr. Arnold acknowledges, “wished all the New Testament, as we have it, should be admitted.” And so it was in the West directly after, owing not a little, perhaps, to “the arguments in favor of it, by which Jerome forwarded their admission;” but it was not Jerome who imposed it on the Church; it was the Church that thought proper to use her authority in the matter, and to decide what Christ gave her the right to decide. The word of St. Augustine—“I would not believe in the gospels if the authority of the Catholic Church did not induce me to it”—staggered the sensitiveness of Mr. Arnold, who exclaims that “this sentence would have been for Paul inconceivable.” Yet it is a true word, to which we are sure St. Paul would have assented, chiefly as in his time there was no New Testament yet written down, and he could invoke no other authority but the *living voice of the Church*.

In those innumerable copies of the New Testament which existed in the most primitive ages of the Church, and which it was the custom to read during service every Sunday—as many texts of contemporary authors testify—there must have been certainly many mistakes, owing to the inaccuracy of the amanuenses; other faults probably were due to an inexact translation when a book from the Greek was turned into Latin; heretics, moreover, intentionally corrupted the text of those writings which they used, when they did not invent wholly some pretended apostolic works. Consequently, in course of time, when it became necessary to have altogether reliable records, criticism had to come in, and compare copies, and choose between them, giving to each its proper authority and weight. We have already spoken of the labors of Origen and St. Jerome, and any one acquainted with their lives and works feels certainly a proper respect for what they accepted as authentic. Yet we must not believe that they were the only ones. From the second century of the Church, we see an array of great men, such as the world had seldom seen in so short a time on earth. Each bishop, each teacher, each great Christian of those times, became a critic; and as there is no celebrated Christian writer of those ages who did not comment on some

books of Holy Scripture, chiefly on those of the New Testament, we see at once how the pure text could be gradually ascertained, and produce the collection we now peruse. But it was the authority of the Church which put its seal on the whole. Catholics know well what this means; Protestants or rationalists have scarcely any conception of it. In a few words, it comes to this: Christ gave his Church the power to teach, and promised that she would not err in doctrine. The Church fulfills her mission, not only by the decisions of her pontiffs, but likewise by the books she gives us to read as divine. The strict conclusion is that neither in faith, in morals, nor in history, can there be any error in the books of Scripture she places in our hands; but she does not say that every word, exactly as it stands, is divine; that owing to the labors of her critics, and to her authority as teacher, there are no mistakes, irrelevant as to faith, morality, or history. There may be a great number of them, although less, probably, than in many profane books which everybody accepts as authentic and true; but such as they are, we call them divine only as to what they teach us to believe and they prescribe us to do. This is all. It is not against us that the shaft of ridicule is directed, which Mr. Arnold throws off with a visible and malicious pleasure: "That there are many good people who imagine that the Bible has come down from heaven in the panoply of all its chapters, and verses, and words, and commas." We give merely the substance of his thought; it is unnecessary to quote more exactly the words.

One phrase of the author of *Literature and Dogma* has required longer comment than was intended; the discussion of the second part of his proposition must be carried through very briefly.

Secondly, although the apostles were truly far below Jesus, as Mr. Arnold justly says, yet they could understand him fully, when they began their ministry, in spite of what he may pretend; and thus we have in the gospels the true doctrine of the Master. The incidental phrase—when they began their ministry—is written advisedly, because it is perfectly sure that during the life of Jesus, even after they had been several years constantly with him, they did not yet understand him fully. The texts of the gospels which prove it are numerous, clear, and decisive; there is no need of quoting them; the rationalists, who know so well Scripture, could inflict on us a long list of such passages as these; we beg of them to forbear, as we, too, know them. But there are several passages, chiefly in the

fourth gospel (for which, happily, Mr. Arnold feels a predilection), which promised to the apostles a time, in the near future, when they would not only understand him fully, but even remember clearly all he had told them, which they might otherwise have forgotten. Thus “the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you : ”\* and “when he, the Spirit of truth, shall come, he will teach you all truth.”† Long before Jesus made this promise to his apostles, John had stated positively that even after they believed in him, something was wanted for their understanding of him, and the efficiency of their ministry : “This he said of the Spirit which *they* should receive *who* believed in him ; for as yet the Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”†

All Christians are aware that this promise of the Redeemer was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost ; and directly after, the apostles appear to be altogether different men from what they were before. This transformation is, of course, rejected by all rationalists ; yet it is the only way to explain the conversion of the world to Christianity, which, undeniably, followed soon after. The rationalists labor, consequently, under some disadvantage at least, when they endeavor to account naturally for the destruction of idolatry, and the establishment of the Christian religion. It is precisely the object of these volumes to show that their labor is in vain, and that God alone could produce the change we all witness in our day. But it is manifest that it requires but good faith to perceive a great difference in the conduct, and consequently the interior spirit, of the apostles, before the death of their Master, and after the coming of the Holy Ghost. This supposes certainly the admission that the supernatural order exists, and that the action of God was visible at least at the great turning-point of human history ; and yet there are writers who have made up their mind that divine intervention in the affairs of men is impossible. Still, it results evidently from indubitable facts, and it is consequently possible. At least, no one can deny that if the apostles did not fully understand Christ before his death, they showed by their lives that they understood him afterward. Mr. Arnold, who is not afraid sometimes of falling into some contradiction, and who believes that the fourth gospel (St. John’s) under-

\* John, xiv. 26.

† John, xvi. 18.

‡ John, vii. 39.

stands Christ better than the Synoptics (the three others), admits, nevertheless, that in these last we have, First, the method of Jesus : " Cleanse the *inside* of the cup ; what comes from within, that defiles a man." Secondly, the secret of Jesus : " He that will love his life shall lose it ; he that will lose his life shall save it." Thirdly, the sweet reasonableness and mildness of Jesus : " Learn of me, that I am mild and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." What more can be wanted than such admissions as these ? Is it not proved by the author of *Literature and Dogma* himself that the apostles knew Jesus ? We say that they showed in their after-life how they had come even to a most practical knowledge of him, and in reality in their own individual persons they *cleansed the inside of the cup* ; *lost their life to save it* ; and proved themselves *mild and lowly in heart*. But this they did, owing to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in them, and they did many other things included surely, more or less, in the three points indicated, yet which, explained in detail, would go to prove that in truth they *understood* their Master and *copied* him in their daily life, and *followed* him humbly, and constantly, and unreservedly to the bitter end. Can any modern writer understand Jesus better than they did ? Let him try to imitate the apostles in that regard, and he will soon have faith in the "supernatural," which is always believed in more by the heart than by the mind.

The reckless "criticism" of Mr. M. Arnold proves, therefore, in the end harmless ; and this last improvement on the book entitled *Supernatural Religion*, and on the previous rules of Eichorn, is powerless to shake the edifice raised on earth by Christ and his apostles. The historical and exegetical criticism of the Catholic writers of the seventeenth and following centuries is, consequently, the only one which deserves the name, and by adhering strictly to its rules, the student may hope to acquire a sound knowledge of the true basis of Christianity. And this is derived not only from the inspired books of the New Testament, whose authority cannot be possibly undervalued ; but likewise from the writings of many ancient authors, whose testimony the rationalists of our day endeavor in vain to set aside ; and finally, from the traditions of the primitive Christian Church, which must certainly have a value, in spite of the disdain entertained for them by many modern authors.

Dean Milman is certainly one of these, and in his *History of Christianity to the Extinction of Paganism* he affects to disregard

entirely what many respectable ecclesiastical writers, besides tradition, relate of the origin of Christianity in many countries. For him nothing is known of it but what St. Paul is reported, in the book of Acts and in the genuine epistles, to have done in the Western world. The narrative of the work of the other apostles is dismissed by a general and contemptuous phrase, as beneath the dignity of the critic. If, at least, he followed his system thoroughly, and contented himself in his book with the short statements contained in the New Testament, and the few scraps of profane authors which can be really relied upon, he would have produced a book scarcely one-fourth the size of his own, but at least not giving any false impression of the special facts he would have related. But the work would then have been too meager an affair—and to give it a respectable appearance he had to rely on a fertile imagination. More than one-half of what the work contains is mere speculation ; and if, at the end, the reader imagines he knows how Christianity was established and paganism destroyed, he is of an intellectual nature easily satisfied ; but on the other side, the habitual readers of the Bollandists, the Benedictines, and the great Italian and French critics, would lose their own self-respect if they could be brought to share in the delusion.

It is best, therefore, to follow leaders more safe than the rationalist or Protestant writers of this age ; and we are sure that those who condescend to peruse these pages, will consider the old authors, and the blessed traditions we follow, besides the record of our inspired writers, as not only worthy of all respect, but likewise the only safe guides in the interesting investigation we enter on.

### 3. *Origin and spread of Christianity in Palestine.*

Whilst St. James was left alone to direct the Judeo-Christian communities, and particularly the Church of Jerusalem, the other apostles, finding their countrymen deaf to all entreaties, and persuaded that the city of David could not be the center of the new religion, turned their back on it, and stood in front of the whole heathen world, promised to Christ as "his inheritance." This they had, in fact, begun soon after Pentecost. Peter, naturally, was at the head of the movement, and he had commenced his work when Paul was yet Saul, and an ardent persecutor of the infant Church. It was this first persecution, in which Stephen was put to death, Saul keep-

ing the garments of the murderers, which furnished a first cause of dispersion to the disciples, and spread "the Word" out of Jerusalem.

Directly after, small congregations begin to gather, not only in Samaria, but in Lydda, Joppa, Cæsarea, Azotus, etc.; so that as soon as the apostles are ready to travel to those different places, they find some Christians to welcome them, and their great object is to consolidate the good work, and give it extension and permanence. Thus we find that even in Rome, Christians existed before any apostle went there; and the faith of the Romans was already celebrated throughout the world, according to St. Paul, long before he had been seen by them. Thus again, St. Peter wrote an epistle to the converts of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, most probably before he had been able himself to travel through those countries, and before St. Paul had preached to them. It looks like a sudden explosion of faith, without almost a human cause, and the strange fact must be left to the reflections of the reader.

Samaria is the first place mentioned in the Acts where Peter went with John at the request of Philip the deacon, to impose their hands on those Philip had baptized, that is to say, to confirm them in the faith by calling on them the Holy Ghost. Samaria is thus the first city where the doctrine of Christ was preached out of Jerusalem. It is generally supposed that these new converts were Jews, but no proof of it can be adduced; they might as well have been Samaritans. Simon Magus, certainly baptized by Philip, and to whom Peter refused confirmation on account of his proposal to purchase sacred things with money, was a Samaritan, according to St. Irenæus and Epiphanius; the very village of Gitton, near Samaria, is assigned by Justin as his birth-place, and the good Christian philosopher must have known it, as he was born himself in the neighborhood.

At this time the Samaritans were bitter enemies to the Jews, and had been ever since their return from captivity. When, before the ten tribes of Israel were carried away to Assyria by Psalmanazar, they had been replaced by men of several different races from Babylon, Cuthas, Avas, and Sepharvaim.\* They brought with them their gods: Sochoth-Benoth, Nergal, Asima, Tarthac, etc. But these new inhabitants of the north of Palestine, finding themselves a prey to wild beasts, whose numbers had considerably

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\* IV. Reg. xvii. 24.

increased since the depopulation of the country, they imagined it was the effect of the wrath of the local deities, and at their request the King of Assyria sent them a Hebrew priest from among his captives, who tried to initiate the Samaritans in the worship of Jehova. The result was a strange mixture of Judaism and paganism ; and the expressed desire of the Samaritans to be admitted to the spiritual privileges of the Temple of Jerusalem after Cyrus had allowed it to be rebuilt, being with justice denied, the men of Samaria built themselves a Temple on Mount Garizim, and the two peoples became henceforth hostile, or rather irreconcilable. Philip, as well as Peter and John, who were all coming from Jerusalem, would have had a better prospect to be listened to by the open pagans of Tyre and of Sidon, than by the hybrid Jews of Samaria ; yet it is precisely in that nest of bitter enemies that the faith of Christ, preached by Jewish apostles, is received and embraced. Thus, at the first step of the evangelists, the most strange improbability happens, which is to be repeated a hundred times, later on. The great obstacle also met them, which constantly presented itself to them ever afterward : the sudden presence of heresy. Simon Magus, irritated by the refusal of Peter, became the first heretic, and is the probable author of gnosticism, whose germ he had likely received in the East or in Egypt. There are, however, difficulties on the nature of its errors, which it is not our province to solve ; but he certainly became the head of a sect which lasted several centuries.

The ordinary readers of those primitive facts generally suppose that the apostles contented themselves with a short appearance in a city or town, converting a few of the inhabitants, appointing some one to preside over them, and then passing on to evangelize some other city. This is a great mistake, fostered, unfortunately, by the necessary brevity of our sacred books. The apostles did their work much more thoroughly than this would suppose, and in general did not leave any place they evangelized without having secured firmly in it and in its neighborhood the faith they had planted. This is proved, in this first preaching of Christianity out of Jerusalem, by a few phrases inserted fortunately by the author of the book of Acts : “Having preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, and preached the Gospel to many countries of the Samaritans.”\* The phrase is graphic ; the reader sees directly Peter and John, on

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\* VIII. 25.

their return to the Holy City after having preached the gospel, stopping again in all villages and towns, establishing the religion of Christ more solidly everywhere, and making the whole country Christian, as far as was possible. This picture, joined to the thought of the previous hostility of this people with respect to the Jews, brings directly the conviction that the Holy Spirit whom the apostles had previously received, and whom they brought down by the imposition of their hands on the new converts, was the great efficient cause of this extraordinary change.

Meanwhile, Philip, who had left the two apostles among the Samaritans, was directed by an angel to proceed southwest toward Gaza, on the confines of the desert. On the road he met the eunuch of Queen Candace, who ruled over the Ethiopians of Meroë, and sent him back to his country a baptized Christian. Dean Milman smiles, it is true, at the early conversion of Ethiopia, and does not think that a critic can admit it. Later on proofs will be given that the Ethiopians, both of Meroë and of Abyssinia, received the faith of Christ at a very early period, but the first much sooner than the second ; and those who have read of the constant intercourse, during many ages anterior to Christianity, between the black race of those countries and the Arabs, Phœnicians, and Jews, will not find it difficult to trust the remarkable and abundant documents we intend to give on the subject of their adoption of the faith, predicted so long before by David and Isaias. At any rate Scripture itself attests already that the black minister of a black queen of some country of Central Africa, in a voyage to Jerusalem to worship the God of the Jews, as many Ethiopians had done frequently before, received the true explanation of prophecies which he had probably often read without understanding them properly ; and, convinced by the recital of recent events of which he may have heard in Jerusalem, but which Philip was the first to relate to him with conviction and force, he received the sacrament lately instituted in place of the circumcision well known to Africans, and thus he went to communicate the good news to his countrymen.

Philip, however, as full of zeal as were Peter and John, whom he had lately left, did, along the sea from Azotus to Cæsarea, what the apostles were at the time doing in the Samaritan country : " Philip was found in Azotus, and passing through, he preached the Gospel to all the cities, till he came to Cæsarea." Thus, in a short time, he preached the new Gospel all along the coast of the former Philistine

territory. What was, then, the state of the people living along those desolate shores? At the north end of this coast lay the splendid new and Greek city of Cæsarea; but Azotus, Accaron, Geth, Joppa itself, were very different from the modern capital built by Herod the Great. It is proper to examine this a little more in detail.

When a superficial glance is given to the *Antiquities of the Jews*, by Josephus, it looks, indeed, as if the whole country of Palestine and Syria had been entirely Hellenized by the Seleucidae. The names of men, particularly, would almost persuade the reader that the entire territory was inhabited by Greeks. This is carried to such an extent that the Jews themselves, living in the center of the country—and whom we know to have preserved to the last a strong antipathy against anything foreign to their nation—the Jews seem to be transformed into as many Greeks. It is known that Hyrcanus I. was, of all the Asmonean princes, the most devoted to his country and religion; yet the three ambassadors he sent to Rome were Hellenes, if we believe in their names, as given by Josephus. The first of them, it is true, was called Simon, and this seems to be a Hebrew cognomen; but the historian says, "he was the son of Dositheus," which certainly looks Greek enough. The whole nomenclature of names is certainly puzzling to any one who is acquainted with the real state of Syria at the time. We must, before long, endeavor to find the solution of the difficulty.

With respect to the religion of the various heathen tribes, Josephus is almost as unsatisfactory as in regard to their names. He seems to take a very slight interest in the matter. He remarks that Hyrcanus, after subduing the Idumæans, obliged them to receive the circumcision, and, consequently, to observe the Mosaic law. He states that under Alexander Janneus, the Jews entirely destroyed Pella, because its inhabitants would not consent to change their own religious rites for those peculiar to the Jews. But nothing is said by the historian of the rites themselves, which the first-mentioned people consented to give up, and of those which the city noticed in the second place refused to surrender. Something more definite is said of Azotus, where the temple of Dagon existed even during the reign of Ptolemy Philometer, so that the fish-god was still worshiped according to ancient rites. But Josephus gives information of this kind very sparingly. What could be the cause of it in both cases?

It is well known that the author of the *Antiquities of the Jews* was rather a lukewarm Hebrew, and went so far as to imagine that

Vespasian was the true Messiah. He was evidently an admirer, both of the Roman power and of Greek civilization, and wrote his books, not so much for his countrymen, as for the foreigners, of whom he was all his life the sycophant. Did he wish to make his works more attractive to Hellenists or Romans by eliminating from them all barbarous Hebrew names or words? Did he on that account translate in Greek everything which could naturally take this form, and leave in Hebrew nomenclature only what was not susceptible of such a change? It looks, indeed, so to us; but we make this suggestion only in the form of a doubt, which may seem more or less probable to the reader. Let him remember that Josephus wrote in Greek, and for the Greeks, and could he hope that pages after pages filled with barbarous names would be pleasant reading for Hellenes or Romans? It is evident the thing was puzzling to him. The names of cities, which he could not change, were already numerous enough; the proper names of men, which could bear the transformation, would look better in this new dress. Perhaps this had lately become the fashion among the Jews, as Canadians in the United States take often a fancy to give what they think to be an English form to their own French family cognomens. But what seems chiefly to prove that something of the kind must have taken place, is that Syria and Palestine had been in fact scarcely touched by Western civilization, except in the new cities built by the Seleucidæ, or the Romans; and there could not have been, consequently, such a thorough revolution in the common appellations of the people. The article of "dress" is a first voucher of it. Dean Stanley thought proper lately, in an address at Sion College, England, "on Ecclesiastical vestments," to say that "the same general costume pervaded all classes of the Roman Empire from Palestine to Spain." It seems to be admitted now by all English writers, even among those who pretend to a real knowledge of antiquity, that Rome had stretched over all the nations she had subdued the same level of language, manners, dress, etc., etc.; yet nothing is more completely erroneous. Rev. R. F. Littledale, in the *Contemporary Review* for March, 1875, answered the Dean with respect to "dress," and commenced his reply by the forcible words that "Such was never the case for a moment." He proved it for Gaul, for Asia Minor, for Greece, nay, for many places in Italy; he showed it in particular for Syria, in answer to Mr. Stanley, who had stated that "the dress of the Syrian peasants was substantially the same as that of the Greek or the Roman." We can-

not enter into all the details, which, however, deserve to be looked into by those who might entertain doubts about it.

After the article of "dress," that of "language" comes naturally. The reader of Josephus might imagine that all spoke Greek in Palestine; but to think so would be a great mistake. The Jews certainly spoke mostly an Aramaic dialect, called now Chaldaic, and preserved yet in the *Targum* of Onkelos. In the north of Mesopotamia and a great part of Syria, there is no doubt that the pure Syriac language was used; a rich literature, of which we have yet to speak, was forming at the time in Nisibis, Edessa, and all along the Upper Tigris and Euphrates. In the time of St. John Chrysostom, the country people living around Antioch spoke yet the Syriac dialect.\* Along the Mediterranean coast, there is no doubt that the Greek prevailed in Antioch, Cæsarea, and the neighborhood of those two cities; but the Semitic dialects of the Phœnicians in the north, and the Cushite language of the Philistines in the south, could not have been obliterated, since very few Greeks or Romans settled in those parts of the country. Whenever Josephus speaks of the incursions of the Syrian kings, the Egyptian monarchs, or the Asmonean chieftains, into the old country of the Philistines, namely, in the territories of Azotus, Gaza, Accaron, etc., it is always under the form of raids, not that of permanent occupation. The original language of those places could not have been much disturbed.

But there is yet a third method of judging of the point now under consideration; it is the special government of those cities. They belonged alternately to all the surrounding powers, but always retained intact their municipal self-government. This is clear from many passages of the book called the *Antiquities of the Jews*. One of them in particular is remarkable; it is the story of the siege of Gaza by Alexander Janneus, which lasted a whole year. All the details of it go to prove that the inhabitants of the city were fighting for their own municipal rights. Five hundred of them formed a "senate;" and they were all killed by the Jewish army in the "Temple of Apollo," where they had fled.

This last phrase brings on the consideration of their religion. The name of "Apollo" given to the temple has no significance whatever. It might have been some sun-god; there were a great number of them all along this coast; and for a Greek all sun-gods

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\* Hom. 1.

were Apollos. It is well known how Herodotus in his description of Egypt dubs all the Egyptian deities with Greek names ; and the reader is surprised to find Jupiter, Apollo, Minerva, Vulcan, Hercules, etc., worshiped apparently in the country of the Pharaohs. It is likewise what happened to Julius Cæsar in Gaul, who found in that Celtic country all the divinities of his own Roman pantheon.

But it is known that precisely at the period of which we speak, a great phenomenon was taking place in Rome, where all the divinities of the Orient, particularly of Syria, were admitted into full partnership with the gods of the Hellenic mythology ;—it is proved in addition that those strange deities were very different from those worshiped anteriorly by the Romans, and, in fact, these new cults brought in a profound degeneracy of morality and religion in Rome ; and one of the most prolific sources of the corruption of manners in the capital of the world was precisely the introduction of these new gods ; we cannot but believe, consequently, that the idolatry prevalent in Emesa, Sidon, Joppa, Accaron, Gaza, etc., was altogether foreign to that of Cæsarea and Antioch, of Athens and Rome. These few words must suffice for the present purpose.

Thus it is easy to conceive the position of Philip the deacon, in those old cities placed in a wilderness of burning sand between Egypt and Palestine. He comes to tell the swarthy inhabitants of that coast that their worship of Dagon, of the Sun-god, of Astarte, perhaps, if they had adopted that deity of Syria, is all wrong ; that it is giving to monsters the honor due only to the Creator of Heaven and Earth ; that he had himself been admitted a short time previously into the society of the true Son of God ; he had heard his words, witnessed his power over nature ; seen him die on a cross, but rise from the sepulchre ; and that in his name only, by believing in him, repenting of their sins, and receiving the true baptism, they could hope to be saved. And directly Christian congregations are formed, until apostles should arrive, confirm them, and appoint bishops over them. How can all this be explained naturally ?

He was yet employed in this holy work when Peter came to Lydda and Joppa on his way “to visit all the new converts :” *dum pertransiret universos.* But he was destined first to baptize a Roman proselyte, and by receiving Cornelius into the Church, to open her gates to the whole Western world. The reader is sufficiently acquainted with the conversion of this holy centurion, as it is related

in the *Acts*, and also with the solution of the difficulty which might have troubled the apostle with respect to the reception of Gentile proselytes. Peter knew that he was sent to the whole world, and not to the Jews only ; but was it a duty for him to oblige the converts from heathenism to submit first to the Mosaic ordinances, and keep them as the Jews did ? He was directed from heaven not to do so, even before the Council of Jerusalem had pronounced on the question. But leaving aside details too well known to be insisted upon, a word must be said on late discoveries made in the Roman catacombs by Mr. De Rossi—on the patrician families whose members joined the Church in the first ages—and commented on a few years ago by Dom Guéranger, in his most interesting work on *Sainte Cécile et la Société Romaine aux deux premiers siècles*. There can be no doubt that the centurion Cornelius belonged to one of those patrician families. Epigraphy is justly considered, at this time, as one of the surest means of settling disputed points in early history. When a question arises on any remote event, an inscription, a fact recorded on a contemporary monument, settles the controversy at once, and shows where truth lies in the disputed matter. But there are, under the actual soil of Rome, immense galleries used for burial in the first ages of Christianity ; and we know that those narrow crypts, called now catacombs, were not only cemeteries for the Christians, but likewise churches and places of meeting for their religious purposes. Each grave, dug in the hard sand on both sides of the galleries, is closed with a marble slab on which is inscribed the name, the age, often the manner of death of the person whose body had been deposited in the tomb. For great personages in Church and State, occasionally a sarcophagus contains the remains ; and paintings known now by engraving to all lovers of art, adorn the walls of large inclosures built here and there in those mansions of the dead.

These holy depositories of religion have been often described ; but only partially in previous times, as their extent is immense, and the way to many of them is often obstructed. In our age, the celebrated Cavaliere de Rossi has done more to forward discovery, and explain whatever remained yet obscure, than all previous explorers united together ; and the system introduced by him in those studies has rendered this kind of research invaluable for early history. His attention was early directed to the elucidation of the municipal and social records of Rome from the time of Augustus down to the latest period

when catacombs ceased to be used for burial or worship. The great patrician families in particular excited his curiosity, and soon his industry was crowned by remarkable discoveries. It is well known to the reader of Livy that the Cornelii and the Cecilii Metelli were celebrated from almost the earliest times of the Republic, and that in the Scipios both families reached the highest point of renown and grandeur. Their connection with nearly all the noblest *gentes* of the city rendered their particular deeds, we may say, public events in the State. But as soon as Augustus changed the government and constitution, by originating what has since been called the Empire, the Cornelii and Cecilii cease at once to be mentioned in Roman history, although we do not read that these two families had been extinguished, or even touched, in the civil wars of the triumvirs. De Rossi found out, to his surprise and great delight, that after having been in former times the greatest citizens of pagan, they had become the noblest members of Christian Rome. The details concerning the *Cornelia gens* found in the catacombs, and confirming other records unconnected with Christianity, are numerous and extremely interesting. We may come back to this subject, when treating of the origin of our religion in Rome.

But what must attract our chief attention at this moment, is that, without doubt, the centurion Cornelius, baptized by St. Peter, belonged to the family of the Cornelii. The name alone would be a sufficient voucher, unless he was a freedman of this *gens*, which can scarcely be supposed in the present case, when we consider his military position and character, and his wealth according to the book of Acts. We know, moreover, that under Tiberius and his successors, the great patrician families, in general, adopted a life of excessive luxury which soon brought destruction upon them; but a few men, nobly born in disposition as well as by blood, remained attached to the principles of their ancestors, and solicited a position in the army, accepting whatever was offered them as preferable to a sojourn in corrupt and degraded Rome. Cornelius must have been one of them. The *Cohors Italica*, in which he was a centurion, was composed of volunteers, as we are aware from an epigraphic monument preserved by Borghesi; and these military organizations, at the beginning of the Empire—formed outside of the legions—had only for commanders a tribune at the head of each *cohors*, and centurions under him, as general officers. No position could be more honorable for the son of a noble family disgusted with the state of

society prevalent in the capital ; and the naturally virtuous inclinations of the young Cornelius, strengthened by the spectacle of a monotheist nation as the Jews were, had attracted him toward them, so that before he was directed by Heaven to call on Peter, he was the great friend and advocate of Judaism, and helped with his means every good work going on among the Hebrews.\*

Such was the occasion which brought the apostle to Cæsarea, and enabled him to acquire more exact notions of the Romans and of Rome in the few days which, on invitation, he spent in the house of Cornelius.† It is very likely that at this time Peter sent some of his disciples to Rome, where a congregation of Christians existed already when he went to Italy himself, a few years later, whose “faith was celebrated in the whole world,” before Paul left the East.

The Prince of the Apostles, meanwhile, found himself in the midst of a magnificent Greek city ; for so indeed was at the time Cæsarea. It had been built, not long before, by Herod the Great, at a place called “Strato’s Tower,” mentioned by Strabo and many ancient authors. During ten years the Jewish king had employed all his means, and used all his care, to found a city which would surpass Jerusalem in magnificence ; and its immense population was almost wholly composed of Greeks, with a Roman garrison and officials. The Jews probably scrupled to settle in it, as nothing in this city could remind them of their religion, and the Greek mythology was in full sway. After having preached, therefore, to the Jews, to the Samaritans, and to Syrian pagans probably, Peter had to face Roman and Greek worshipers of Jove and of Venus. It is this rapid succession of antagonistic customs, beliefs, and worships, which we would our readers should bring close to their mind, and store in their memory, as the only means of judging of the possibility of success, humanly speaking, in an attempt made by such a naturally ignorant man as Peter, taken suddenly from his boat and fishing-tackle, and intrusted with a mission in which all the learning and knowledge of the world appeared to be required.

And besides his ignorance and want of knowledge of the world, there was the suddenly springing up of questions most difficult to solve, and in whose case a false decision might bring on directly the destruction of all his hopes, and the end of all his labors. There was, at this very moment, facing him, the question of receiving uncircum-

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\* Acts, x. 22.

† Acts, x. 43.

cised pagans in the Church. How should he do so? under what conditions? The Jews, with whom he had labored so far constantly, and who then composed, we may say, the entire Church, had very strict ideas on the subject. Offend them by a rash decision, they will leave you directly; satisfy them, you close the door to all the outside world. A word has already been said on this question, but the aspect under which it is to be viewed at this moment is merely that of expediency; the certainty of immediate ruin, if the undertaking of the apostles had been only a human enterprise, could not but strike the most thoughtless and unreflecting mind.

Peter, however, does not hesitate; and in declaring his determination, he states openly that his reason for it is simply the divine command: "You know how abominable it is for a man that is a Jew, to keep company, or to come into one of another nation; but God hath showed to me, to call no man common or unclean." This decision certainly was destined to indispose and alienate many Judeo-Christians; yet the majority accepted it, and the infant Church weathered the storm. Thus it happened in all difficult circumstances in which the apostles found themselves involved. They received their decisions ready-made from heaven, or they prayed if Heaven had not yet spoken, and they invariably chose the wise party.

About this time the conversion of St. Paul brought an unexpected friend to the cause of Christianity; but as his chief labors were to be directed toward the West, which cannot occupy us yet so early, it is better to postpone this consideration for the moment, as well as the narrative of the two voyages of Peter to Rome, for the same reason.

Peter was just left by us at Cæsarea in the house of Cornelius. The Roman centurion was not the only one who had received "the Word." He had spoken beforehand to a number of his "relatives and intimate friends"—*convocatis cognatis et necessariis amicis*—so that when the apostle arrived he found "a great number who had met together"—*invenit multos qui convenerant*. They listened with Cornelius to the simple instruction of Peter, and at the end of it "the Holy Ghost descended on all those who had heard the Word." Thus a congregation was formed at Cæsarea composed chiefly of Romans, and among them one member at least of the *gens Cornelia*. We know that soon in Cæsarea many Greeks likewise embraced the faith, since in after time it was altogether an Hellenist Church, and the bishops placed at the head of it were invariably Greeks;

unless the tradition is true which makes Cornelius the first bishop of the city.

In the primitive ages of Christianity we meet often with analogous circumstances. The head of a family, or some important member of it, is not the only one converted, but the "whole house" is said to have "believed"—*credidit domus ejus tota*. And later on, when the faith spreads, according to the same old records, it extends from family to family: a friend enlightens his friend, and the new convert brings on with him "*cognatos et amicos*." It is the literal fulfillment of the New Testament parable, where it is said that a man having lost one of his sheep, in case he finds it again he calls together "*amicos et vicinos*" to apprise them of the "treasure" he had lost and found anew. Christian belief is really a "treasure" belonging to the whole human race, which the pagans had lost, but whose recovery filled them with joy, so that they communicated the good news to their "friends and neighbors," that they might also share in the privilege. If a natural way of explaining the spread of the Gospel is demanded, this is far more true and satisfactory than the numerous suppositions of rationalists bent on doing away with the intervention of God. And this "rational explanation" is so much the better and the more reliable that in the New Testament it is always connected, some way or other, with the intervention of heaven, either by the positive assertion of a miraculous fact, or by an inspiration coming directly from the Holy Spirit.

In explaining the propagation of Christianity, the rationalists exclude purposely the prodigies mentioned in our sacred records, and the only reason they can give is stated plainly and candidly by Mr. Arnold: "miracles do not happen." This "exhaustive" reason comes to this: "I have never seen one; none can exist consistently with the universality of the physical and physiological laws; therefore 'they do not happen.'" As we are, and must be persuaded that Christianity was the work of God in its propagation as well as in its plan and inception, we know that miracles "do happen," and the question must certainly come later on for discussion, summarily at least, unless it is impossible to do so. But in case the sequel allows it, the time has not yet arrived; and thus in the rapid sketch whose outlines we are drawing, it looks as if no importance was attached to it. Several prodigies mentioned in the New Testament have been passed over already without an allusion even. The fact, for instance, that in the days following Pentecost, the shadow of the person of

Peter passing through the streets of Jerusalem was sufficient to heal the sick, the resurrection of Tabitha, and other incidents of the kind, have been entirely left out : yet it cannot be denied that among the eight thousand converts he made in the course of a few days, many believed in Jesus, because those prodigies were performed *in his name*. But the object had in view in such omissions as these, is merely that in order to produce a stronger impression, the whole subject of the “supernatural” must be brought together in one dissertation ; because it can be easily understood that each special miraculous fact, when spread out in the narrative, is almost lost in extraneous matter, and the mind is not convinced so powerfully as when a picture of the subject by itself is drawn, containing the main facts, and showing their connection and importance.

Meanwhile Peter in the house of Cornelius, in daily intercourse with the “relatives and friends” of the centurion, was in fact in Roman society, could not but hear them speak of Rome every moment ; and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who had brought him in this company—the text of the *Acts* is positive on the subject—could not but form plans for the evangelization of Rome. The more all these circumstances are put together, the more it seems probable that it was from these days of retirement and holy proselytism that must be dated the mission of the first envoys of Peter to the Romans, and that probably a member of the gens Cornelius was chosen for this great purpose. This will, in due time, corroborate the Roman tradition which has for many centuries obtained, that when the apostle himself went to the metropolis of the world, he first received the hospitality of *Cornelius Pudens*, and it was the house of this senator which became the first Christian church in Rome. If this is not absolutely certain, it is at least much more probable than many suppositions and theoretical views of modern writers, who appear so scrupulous in point of truth, that they exclude even positive statements of Scripture itself, as not sufficiently proven ; and finding no historical documents able to resist the dissolving power of their severe criticism, are reduced to the necessity of drawing the authentic documents of the early Christian history in Rome from the wonderful archives of their own imagination.

But if the holy “Fisher of men” was thus engaged for a few days with Romans of pure blood, and engrossed with schemes for the conversion of pagan Rome, he could not close his eyes to the spectacle

he witnessed every time he went out of the house and passed through the streets. He had never been before in a Greek city, and found himself, as it were, in a new world, so different from what he had witnessed for a long time around the lake of Genesareth, then occasionally in Jerusalem and throughout Judea, and finally of late in Samaria, and along the road to Joppa and Lidda. There were Hellenes certainly spread here and there through those various parts of the country ; a good number perhaps in Jerusalem ; and that portion of the Temple which was called the Gentile's Court was filled chiefly with Greeks on all great festival days of the Jews. Yet it is impossible to insist too much on the fact that Judea was far from being a Greek country ; and it is well known that the attempt made by one of the Herods to introduce Greek civilization in his dominions failed entirely, owing to the firm adhesion of the Jews to their faith and nationality. The king had gained over to his project but a few hybrid Hebrews of the cast of Josephus the historian. But in and around Cæsarea it was otherwise ; the whole population was polytheist.

Peter, therefore, witnessed things of which he had before no conception. Art, trade, and culture were flourishing in the city, as we know for certain from Josephus himself ; Greek schools of oratory and philosophy attracted many ardent disciples aiming at intellectual life. It was so at the time in all Hellenic towns of importance. Shortly after, a great and renowned Christian school was established at Cæsarea, in which later on Eusebius, the ecclesiastical historian, was a teacher, and which as we have positive proofs was frequented by many foreigners, chiefly Syrians from Edessa and Nisibis. From all this it can be safely concluded that previously institutions of profane learning existed in that city, since invariably at the time, the Christians gave a great development to their schools, wherever pagan literature had been cultivated on a large scale. Thus it happened at Antioch, Alexandria, Athens, and Rome.

All these circumstances must have made on the mind of Peter a deep impression ; and independently of the Spirit of God that led him, his attention was naturally called to the Greek world which first burst upon him in all its earthly beauty. Thus he thought of going to Antioch, a still greater Greek city than Cæsarea, and, as is well known, he there entered into open intercourse with Hellenes, accepting their invitations to dinner, and thus scandalizing the over-strict Judeo-Christians of Jerusalem.

We must, therefore, date from this epoch of the life of Peter the first open and successful introduction of Christianity among the Hellenic race. This is a most important point in Christian history which must attract our attention for a short time at least. The subject will come later on for fuller treatment when speaking of the apostleship of St. Paul, to whom the mission among Greeks was chiefly given ; but, as a part of Syria, about which the present investigation is mainly concerned, was at the time entirely Hellenic, we must anticipate, to a certain extent, on a matter which is to be treated more at length afterward.

#### 4. *On the first Greek Christians in Palestine and Syria.*

The Greeks were very early navigators, and they succeeded the Phœnicians all over the Mediterranean Sea, and its gulfs and bays. As usual with nations given to seamanship, they sent colonies in all directions, even before the Persian wars. But particularly after they had successfully repelled the great Eastern invasion, did they found Hellenic cities not only in the center of Europe, but in the north as far as the interior of Scythia above the Euxine and the Caspian ; in the south on the African shore ; and in Asia as far as Armenia and Mesopotamia. The conquests of Alexander even spread the Greek power to the heart of Hindostan, and Seleucus Nicator, after the Macedonian conqueror, thought of annexing a part of India to his empire. He wisely desisted from it, however, on account of the impossibility of keeping together nations so widely different in every respect, and concluded a treaty of amity with Sandracottus, who ruled over the Hindoos of the Ganges. It is said by some trustworthy authors that Seleucus alone founded thirty-four Hellenic cities in Asia, eighteen of which bore his name. Antioch was the most celebrated, and soon became the third city of the world. Its schools were the most renowned after those of Alexandria ; and when Rome extended her power as far as Mesopotamia the city on the Orontes became the resort of many Roman patricians, who built themselves villas and palaces in the neighborhood, in spite of the liability of the country to earthquakes. The heat of the climate was tempered by the shady and cool groves planted all around, that of Daphne being the best known.

The schools of Antioch in pagan times partook at once of an Eastern and Western character. The population being chiefly Greek, the

metaphysical systems of Hellenist philosophers were pursued with ardor, as in Greece itself ; but the large percentage of the Eastern races—Jews, Syrians, or Asiatic—contained within its walls, had introduced early the taste for Oriental dreaminess, and imaginative speculations ; thus astrology and gnosticism became fields of idle reveries. In the very time of the apostles, Cerinthus, born at Antioch, and, according to Fleury,\* the chief of the sedition mentioned in the *Acts*,† became the first propagator of a Jewish gnosticism, against which, it is said, St. John directed many passages of his Gospel. There was evidently, in the teaching of the schools at Antioch, more of the Judaism of Philo than could be found even at Alexandria ; and some taint of it remained a long time after Christianity was established. In many of his homilies and discourses, St. John Chrysostom attacked this hankering after Mosaic ordinances even among the Christians, who, in his time, formed more than half the population of the city.‡ But in spite of these dangerous doctrines, the Antiochian schools attracted a large number of young men ; and if at the apostolic period a single “professor” like Cerinthus could excite a sedition in the city, we may judge from it of the influence of teaching over the population. Several centuries afterward, St. Chrysostom expressly stated that a doctrine preached at Antioch reached soon the boundaries of the empire, or rather of the universe. And this happened in the case of truth as well as in that of error. It was of the teaching of his predecessor, Flavian, that he expressed it tersely and pointedly.§

There were certainly in the Hellenic race many characteristics of the highest order. Mental pursuits excited their ardor as well as æsthetics, and industry ; but chiefly was their language spread over the whole civilized world ; and it was destined to be the tongue of the Roman Church for at least a couple of centuries. Yet, let not the reader imagine that it had superseded all other languages which were formerly native in the places where the Greeks settled. It is again St. John Chrysostom who assures us that still in his time the country people around Antioch—and much more certainly at a greater distance—spoke only their Syrian dialect. The passage is

\* Liv. i. 83.

† Acts, xv. 2, et seq.

‡ Vol. i. Chrysost. op., p. 728, D., edit. Gaume, 1889.

§ κοινὸν τῆς πατρίδος διδάσκαλον, καὶ διὰ τῆς πατρίδος τῆς οἰκουμένης ἀπάσης (*Homilia 1<sup>o</sup> quando presbyter factus est*).

important,\* and shows that in his time Christianity had established itself not only in the cities and towns, but even among the country people, who flocked to Antioch at the great festivals to share in the grace of the sacraments, and whom the great and holy orator praises highly, as leading a pure life, far superior, morally, to that of philosophers, although they were completely ignorant of the highly civilized Greek idiom.

This was the important center of enlightenment to which St. Peter was early attracted, and there he soon met St. Paul, whom he had seen but once before at Jerusalem. Yet he had preceded, within the walls of Antioch, the apostle of the Gentiles, who in fact came only after him wherever he went. This is true of Jerusalem, of Samaria and the seaboard, of Antioch, of Cappadocia, and Asia Minor, of Rome, finally, as we shall have occasion to see. But here we must confine our reflections to Syria, and even only to that part of it which had been imbued with Hellenic ideas.

Here it is proper and natural to ask, What human hope could Peter entertain of converting to the cross of Christ such a population as that of Antioch? People say again that he addressed himself only to the Jews, or, at most, to Hellenistic Jews, and thus he could easily convince them; but this seems untenable for the simple reason of the difficulty which his proselytism soon occasioned, and which could not certainly have happened on the supposition that his labors were confined to Hebrews, or, at most, to Greek-speaking Israelites. All this last class of people considered themselves, with reason, as bound by the Mosaic ordinances, and since Peter, until that time, had kept them himself faithfully, he could not even think of altering his way of life for the sake of pleasing his new converts, since they followed themselves the same customs. It was when going to dine with his proselytes that the difficulty stared him in the face. He was right in thinking that to confirm them in the good purpose of embracing the faith which his preaching had suggested, no means were more likely to succeed than social intercourse with them. But on the first occasion that presented itself, neither the ablutions prescribed by the law were attended to, nor was the observance of a hundred minutiae detailed by Moses kept. Worse yet, the table was, no doubt, covered with many dishes used by the Greeks of those times and known to antiquaries versed in Hellenic lore, particularly

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\* Vol. ii. 222, A., edit. Gaume.

in the culinary taste of the race. Often, surely, the flesh of animals positively forbidden by "Leviticus" was served out and offered first to the new guest, to the apostle whose words had produced such a favorable impression on their minds and hearts. Peter had found himself exposed to this trial, and, without hesitation, had accepted what the law of Moses had told him to refuse. God had shown him, before the baptism of Cornelius, that the old law was superseded by a better one, and he had no scruple to follow the divine direction.

On the arrival of Jews from Jerusalem, however, in order not to scandalize them by his liberality, he had temporarily ceased to accept from Greeks invitations of this kind ; and for this system of expediency he was reproved by St. Paul. All this proves clearly that the new converts of Peter were men of Hellenic extraction, race, and culture. How could he have entertained the hope of converting them, and after them, of Christianizing the whole city, as was certainly his project ? Could he, with his natural endowments alone, expect to succeed in such an enterprise as this ? The case, particularly, must be considered in the light thrown on it by all rationalists, namely, in the supposition that a new religion having no claim whatever to a supernatural origin, was offered to pious worshipers of Athenè and Apollo, or to the philosophical followers of Aristotle or of Plato, and without the *silly* intervention of ridiculous miracles. We put it to any man of sense : In circumstances like these, would Peter have made a single proselyte ? If he had, all his converts could have been declared as deprived of reason. Yet it is at Antioch that the "disciples" first received the name of "Christians ;" and their attachment to the new religion was such that they underwent, a little later on, dreadful persecutions—from Trajan, who sent their second bishop, Ignatius, to be devoured by wild beasts at Rome, down to Julian the Apostate, who, on his way to Mesopotamia, against Sapor, persecuted in every possible way the Christian inhabitants of the great city, by placing over them Alexander of Heliopolis, a notorious tyrant, and shedding even human blood in the person of a young Antiochian of the name of Theodorus. Such was then the open profession of Christianity at Antioch, that Julian having ordered the relics of St. Babylas to be removed from the grove of Daphne, the whole city made a triumph of this mischievous command, and brought back to the city the sacred remains of the martyr with the pomp of a solemn procession. Julian, exasperated by this rebuke, and the open derision of a Christian people, wrote his *Misopogon* in

answer to their taunts ; and his hostile feelings against the city became the best proof of the attachment of the citizens to the worship of Christ. Yet Antioch was a most polished, enlightened, cultured metropolis when Peter first announced within its walls the doctrine of "the Crucified :" and nothing but the grace of God could bring to the feet of Jesus its pagan population, its rationalistic philosophers, and its worldly and wealthy citizens.

Whilst faith was thus conquering Syria and Palestine, it was likewise spreading over Northern Mesopotamia, if it had not already been planted there before the death of the Redeemer. The history of Nisibis, Edessa, and the whole of Eastern Syria between the Tigris and Euphrates, cannot but strike the reflecting mind ; and if there is some obscurity thrown over the origin of this remarkable conversion to Christianity, the fact of a very early change cannot remain doubtful. A different race of men is the object of this inquiry ; since the new converts neither belonged to the descendants of Abraham, nor to the Cushites of the Philistine country, nor to the Semitic branch of the Phoenicians, much less to the European Hellenes, but certainly to the old Aramaic stock whose features are yet preserved in the monuments of Nineveh.

##### 5. *Origin of Christianity in Syria and Northern Mesopotamia.*

The correspondence of our Lord with Abgar of Edessa, and the subsequent mission of Thaddeus, sent, it is said, by the Apostle St. Thomas, have certainly been a long time rejected as altogether spurious. Fleury, in the fifth book of his history,\* gives from latter Byzantine historians a most silly account of it, and it is probably from this parody that modern criticism has pronounced its absolute condemnation of the whole matter. But these facts rest on authorities very different from late Byzantine historians ; and the Bollandists,† after having discussed all the proofs, and the counter-objections raised on the subject chiefly by Dom Ceillier, admit both the correspondence and the mission of Thaddeus as genuine. The only serious difficulty arises from the fact that Pope Gelasius, in a Council of Rome, in the year 494, enumerates among the apocryphal documents of previous ages : "The epistle of Jesus to Abgar and that of Abgar to Jesus." But from the tenor of the decree, the evident intention of the pontiff and of the council was only to declare that this letter of our Lord

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\* Ch. xxx.

† Vol. xii. oct.

could not be admitted in the *canon of Scripture*, probably because its genuineness was not then sufficiently supported by proofs. But the array of authorities brought out by Assemani in his *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, chiefly from documents of Greek and Syriac churches, is most respectable. Instead of the childish narrative of Fieury we have not only Eusebius and Moses of Chorene, who testify to having inspected themselves the archives of Edessa, and read these old and precious records; but the testimony likewise of Julius Africanus, a whole century older than Eusebius, besides a great number of references made to the same facts by early Greek or Syriac writers, much more copious and positive on that subject than the Latin Fathers, who, living at such a distance from Edessa, could not know so well its traditions.

The only question at this moment, is the real antiquity of the belief in the "correspondence" under consideration, even should we admit the letter of our Lord to be a forgery. For we are concerned merely with the authentic time when Lesser Armenia—as this part of Syria was then called—became Christian, and the belief in the "correspondence" is a sure test of it. Several well-ascertained facts can enable us to judge of it.

First, the country was annexed to the Roman Empire under Caracalla (A.D. 200). The last ruler of the reigning dynasty was then Abgar-bar-Maanu, a Christian sovereign, and the friend of the celebrated Bardesanes. Before him several kings of the same dynasty had been likewise disciples of Christ, and coins still exist of an Abgar ruling in Edessa from 152 to 157, a Christian certainly, since the cross appears on his money. To him Wichellanus attributes the origin of the legend; but it must have had a yet earlier origin, since, secondly, the *Doctrina Addæi*, translated from the Syriac language and published by W. Cureton (*Ancient Syriac Documents*), proves conclusively that Edessa was converted before the time of Irenæus. The manuscript is preserved in the British Museum, and cannot itself be of an age later than the fifth century. Assemani possessed another one of the same character. In both the chief peculiarity consists in this: The New Testament is never quoted, although events of the life of our Lord are mentioned. One short quotation seems to be from the *Diatessaron* of Tatian; but this cannot be now ascertained. The evident conclusion, however, is that this fifth century manuscript contains information anterior to the earliest canon of the four gospels, and consequently this *Doctrina Addæi* must have

been originally written before the middle of the second century, perhaps as early as the martyrdom of Polycarp, unless the word "Diatessaron," which cannot be really deciphered, alludes to the work of Tatian, now lost. In this case the information could not bring us higher up than a few years before Irenæus. But it is to be remarked that the work under consideration relates the conversion not only of Abgar and all his family, but likewise of a multitude of citizens, including even pagan priests; and states that a numerous clergy had been appointed by Thaddeus, and the country places around Edessa had been evangelized and converted. All this must be true at least of a time anterior to Irenæus.

Should, therefore, the genuineness of the *Doctrina Addæi* be contested—as it is by the Bollandists—at least this much must be admitted, that about the middle of the second century, if not earlier, the city of Edessa and the country around were entirely Christian, and already the belief in the authenticity of the correspondence of Abgar with Christ was universal in the country.

This is confirmed by what is known of Nisibis, a celebrated city further removed than Edessa toward the east, and separated from it by the whole breadth of Mesopotamia. It is certain from Josephus that in the very time of our Lord, the Queen of Adiabene, whose capital was Nisibis, was converted to Judaism and went to live and die in Jerusalem. Her name was Helen, in the text of Josephus, who calls her son Monobazos instead of Arsamus, which was his real name. This author always hankers after Greek names. But what is important on this occasion is that the successor of Monobazos at Nisibis caused the Old Testament to be translated from Hebrew into Syriac, as we have it yet. This is positively stated by Josephus. Thus the *Peshito* of the Old Testament—the word *Peshito* is always used for the oldest Syriac version of the Bible—must be considerably older than the year 200 of our era, the time generally assigned by modern writers who do not sufficiently attend to this statement of Josephus, a contemporary author. But what is still more remarkable is that the *Peshito* of the *New Testament* is scarcely more recent than that of the Old; and many critics attribute both to the same translator living then at Nisibis. Thus a Syriac version of the *New Testament* in the East is found earlier than the same books appeared in Greek or Latin in the West. This opens a long series of interesting reflections on the early spread of Christianity along the Upper Euphrates and the Tigris.

Moreover all must admit that at the beginning at least of the fourth century, this part of Syria bordering on Armenia, and contiguous to the Caspian Sea, was found at once to be literally covered with Christian monasteries from which came out the holy men who then labored so ardently for the conversion of Mesopotamia, Persia, and Arabia. But the annals of the West prove that the monastic tree requires a long growth of asceticism and zeal to spread its branches in so many different directions ; chiefly as monasticism cannot be supposed to have originated in Lesser Armenia at the very beginning of its conversion. Lastly, if we consult the excellent map placed at the head of the second volume of Heeren on *Asiatic Nations*, whose object is particularly to give the various roads constructed anteriorly by the Persian kings, a new consideration offers itself to the mind, of great weight certainly in the present discussion. All the details just given tend certainly to prove that the conversion of Edessa and Nisibis must go as far up as the apostolic times ; but the question arises, Could the apostles reach easily that eastern limit, or even go much farther if they pleased ? Was St. Peter particularly placed in a position to attempt it, either by himself or through some other apostle or disciple ? Looking on the above-mentioned map, we are surprised at the prospect which must have naturally opened before him. From Antioch, where he certainly resided at different times, and where according to the most respectable tradition of the Roman Church he established his see, and dwelt seven years, he was at an easy distance from the immense highway so constantly in use from the time of Cyrus down to the period of the Roman sway in the East. Starting from Sardis in Lydia, this noble road ran along the very center of Asia Minor, passing through Phrygia, Lycaonia, and Cappadocia, to reach finally the basin of the Tigris, and thence going south through the old country of the Assyrians, reached finally Susiana, and the capital of the Persian kings. St. Peter must have certainly traveled along this road, as the people of proconsular Asia, Galatia, and Cappadocia, to whom he wrote his first epistle, and whom he must have visited himself, dwelt in its neighborhood. But when once arrived at the eastern limit of Cappadocia, he was actually in Upper Mesopotamia, and very near Nisibis itself.

Again, from Aradus on the Phoenician coast, another highway of the Persian period went east through Syria, crossed the Euphrates, and running south the whole length of Mesopotamia, reached finally Babylon, and at last Susa. This road passed quite near Edessa ; and

St. Peter in his numerous voyages from Caesarea to Antioch had to go necessarily through Aradus, and could not but hear of the facility with which the renowned countries of the East could be reached along that road. Should not this be the way the religion of Christ reached the Upper Mesopotamia, it is certainly impossible to find out a more probable and satisfactory one ; and the numerous traditions preserved in many Greek and Syriac documents published and illustrated with notes by Assemani, form a well-connected network of proofs all tending to the same conclusion. It is easy for modern critics to say that none of them is irrefragable : we reply, that their complexity is sufficient for historic faith ; and that, at any rate, the fact of a very early conversion to Christianity being indisputable, no more reliable account of it can be given than the one just stated.

And this is the more to be accepted as true that Lesser Armenia was at the time an enlightened country, at the very moment of possessing a rich literature, so that the origin of the Christian religion in the country cannot be supposed to have been buried under the shadow of myths and legends, and we must accept the native account as the true one, because nobody could know it better than the noble Syriac writers of the period immediately following. •

Something of this interesting subject has already been touched in the previous chapter. When speaking of the social state of that part of Syria, a paragraph or two made then allusion to Bardesanes and Ephrem. More details are naturally required in this part of the narrative. It is true that, so far, nothing has been discovered previous to Christianity of extensive writings in the Syriac dialect used subsequently by Bardesanes and by Ephrem. Inscriptions and fragments are the only scanty relics of that age. Must we suppose that the Christian kings of the Abgar dynasty—when Edessa was, according to authorities quoted by Assemani,\* “the holy, the blessed city,” *εὐσεβεῖα χοσμονμένη*—so effectually destroyed every vestige of the old polytheism and literature that we know only by chance that Nebo and Belus were worshiped in the district ? It is scarcely credible that without any anterior culture in the country, writers of so exalted a character should have suddenly appeared, and reached at once the highest perfection of the literary art. The *Peshito* of the Old and New Testaments is the first Syriac production we possess, and it is a most remarkable one. It is entirely independent

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\* Bibl. or. i. 261, 278, etc.

from the Septuagint version—this is now perfectly well ascertained ; and if in some passages of the Old Testament it comes nearer to the Septuagint than to the Hebrew, it must have resulted from some posterior corrections ; but originally the translators appear not to have known the version made in Egypt under the Ptolemies. According to Dr. H. J. Wetzer in the *Dictionary of Catholic Theology*—a writer certainly of great weight and immense erudition in Oriental philology : “The principles followed in the translation, as well as its characters of syntax and style, are the same for both Testaments, so that both must be derived from the same translator, and he must have been a Christian. . . . In the time of Ephrem (the first half of the fourth century) nothing was exactly known of its origin. From this ignorance, and from the fact that the holy deacon used it for his commentaries, and called it *our version*, which supposes that it was universally adopted in the Oriental Church, and consequently had already existed a long time, its origin can be referred to the second century after Christ. As to the place where it first appeared, if it were not Nisibis, it must have been Edessa, in Northern Mesopotamia, whence Ephrem received it ; since Christianity flourished there in the second age, so that a translation of the Bible was already required.” Cardinal Wiseman in his *Horæ Syriacæ*, Michaelis in his *Biblioth. Orient.*, and several other German writers, can be consulted on the subject, and in general it may be remarked that the authors most opposed to our views do not place the first appearance of the *Peshito* of both Testaments later than the year 200. But this is certainly extremely remarkable when one reflects that at the same time, in the West, a collection of all the books of the New Testament was almost unknown, and its canon was established only a long time after.

This part is the chief one for us to consider at this moment ; yet a few words on the Syriac literature which then began to become known will render more vivid the impression naturally produced by all these considerations. After Bardesanes and Ephrem, we find other names worthy of mention. In the latter part of the fifth century we meet with Narses at the head of a renowned school in Nisibis, where Barsumas, bishop of the city, called him. He explained the Holy Scriptures during twenty years with such a success that his reputation reached the farthest confines of the West ; and the bishops of Greece, Italy, and Gaul were surprised to hear that the sacred and profane letters were taught with as much lucidity

and depth in the Far Orient as among the Greeks and Romans. The schools of Lesser Armenia embraced all branches of literature ; and there was a superior education answering to the *σχολή* of Greece, and an inferior one corresponding to the *bet-soferin*, or children's schools, of the Talmudists. John Beth-Rabanensis, and Mar-Abas succeeded Narses at Nisibis, and a long list of subsequent teachers could be given which would be superfluous in these pages. Nestorianism, however, gradually invaded this part of Mesopotamia.

Institutions of learning were certainly spread all over the country from the fourth century down to the ninth ; but the great centers of enlightenment were Nisibis and Edessa. According to a very competent writer in Appleton's *Cyclopaedia* :\* “The Syriac literature of that time concerned itself especially with religion, the translating and commenting of the Scriptures, dogmatic and polemical theology, martyrologies and liturgies ; but embraced also history, philosophy, grammar, and the natural sciences ; medicine, the most important science in the Orient, was for many centuries entirely in the hands of the Syrians. A great part of this literature has been lost, and what remains has, as yet, been partially worked up and made accessible. It may be said to have done its principal work in the eighth and ninth centuries, in introducing classical learning to the knowledge of the Arabs. These became the scholars of the Syrians in every department, and their translations of Greek authors are supposed to have been made, especially at the outset, almost altogether from Syriac versions, and by Syrian scholars.”

This is a most remarkable fact, calculated to surprise many enlightened people, who candidly believe that the Saracenic literature was altogether of Arabian growth, and was native to the country of Mahomet. A word having been said in a previous paragraph of the school of Nisibis, that of Edessa must not be left without a short mention. It was Ephrem who established forever its renown. As Narses had been substantially helped at Nisibis by Bishop Barsumas, so likewise Ephrem found at Edessa the enlightened encouragement of the bishops Aitallahas and Barse. His efforts were crowned with such a success, that the vitality of his literary establishment was secured for many ages, and survived the persecutions of Sapor. Many other Christian schools perished in the East under the violent opposition of the Sassanidæ ; that of Edessa continued to exist even

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\* 1st edit., vol. xv.

under the Saracens, and succeeded in taming down the fanatical followers of the Arabian impostor. The exegetic school of Holy Scripture founded by St. Ephrem bore a near resemblance to that of Antioch, of which a word was said in the previous chapter. There is in fact a great resemblance between the characters of Ephrem and of John Chrysostom. Neither of them could be satisfied with the excessive allegorical sense given almost exclusively to the sacred text by Origen and the Africans in general. Many fragments of Syriac expositors, preserved by Assemani, prove that the sensible principles established by the founder of the school were faithfully followed by his successors; and a very respectable list could be found of illustrious men who taught in Edessa after Ephrem, and kept that city a long time proof against the venom of Nestorianism, which unfortunately invaded too soon the churches of Mesopotamia; not so early, however, as it is now generally believed. This question will later on come under review.

All these details prove that not only Christianity had penetrated the country of Upper Mesopotamia at a very early age, but that it had taken deep root in the soil, and produced fruit as abundant and rich as the most favored countries of the West. The very first outburst of apostolic zeal brought to the feet of Christ all the populations of Palestine and Syria; and among them we perceive, from almost the first day, the great and old Aramaic race, bordering on the Far Orient, and the last remnant, it may be said, of the antique Assyrians of Nineveh. Not only all races of mankind crowd together to enter the Church; not only all the languages—Hebrew, Chaldaic, Cushite, Greek, and Syriac—address to the Supreme God the same prayers, offer to Heaven the same mystic sacrifice, and enjoin the same Gospel morality; but all this is done at once; in a few years a great part of those Eastern populations abandon their old superstitions, prejudices, customs, peculiarities, and divergences, to form one body animated by the same faith, the same hopes, the same universal feeling of brotherhood. And not only was this true of the new relations of all those tribes together eighteen hundred years ago; but the Catholic of our day, the sincere Christian of this age, claims a holy companionship with James of Jerusalem, with Cornelius of Cæsarea, with Tabitha of Joppa, with the first Christians of Antioch, with Abgar of Edessa, Izates of Nisibis, the great Syrian Ephrem chiefly, that majestic figure reproducing at the same time the features of the old patriarchs, of the Western

doctors of his days, and of the holy monks of all ages. Who can look at this spectacle, and refuse to acknowledge that there is in it the finger of God ? The progressive ideas of the Romans at the time, the higher moral elevation of the Stoic philosophy then prevalent in the West, the heavy burden of the tyranny of the Cæsars, and the aspirations of all noble souls toward their emancipation and true freedom, all those fine considerations, so much relied upon by modern writers to explain naturally the first rapid progress of Christianity in the Roman world, had certainly nothing to do with the numerous and striking facts we have just recorded, culled as they are from authentic and reliable documents of primitive ages. None of these apparently learned and exhaustive discussions of the great causes which led men to the sweet embrace of Christ can apply to Palestine, Syria, and Northern Mesopotamia. Other causes must be assigned to this fact ; and the only one which can be called satisfactory is the mercy of God bent on fulfilling himself the prophecies uttered long before by the men he had inspired. The same Holy Spirit who had unveiled futurity to the gaze of old seers, spread itself on the whole earth, and filled it to subdue it and bring it back to truth and virtue : “The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the globe of the earth.”

On the very day of Pentecost Peter had called the attention of the Jews to this : What is passing on, he said, is “that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel : ‘And it shall come to pass, in the last days, saith the Lord, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,’ ” etc. Many more texts of the Old Testament might have been adduced by the apostle. The magnitude of the moral and social change effected in so short a time in Palestine and the surrounding countries, required the mighty power of the “Spirit of strength,” who alone can overcome all material and sinister obstacles, and renew the earth when it is defaced and corrupt.

#### 6. *Early spread of Christianity in Chaldea.*

The country adjacent to Syria and Northern Mesopotamia, toward the east and south, requires next our attention. It was called indiscriminately Babylonia or Chaldea, and in our present investigations, gives rise to difficulties which, however, can be got over, and in the end open new views full of interest and light on the subject of early Catholicity.

A previous remark must not be forgotten : If we consult all existing ecclesiastical histories on the origin of Christianity in Chaldea, it looks as if the Gospel had not reached that country before the fifth or sixth century ; and it is described at once as being a prey to the heresy of Nestorius, under the friendly power of the Sassanidæ, which certainly favored it whilst it endeavored to crush Catholicity. The conclusion seems to be that the feet of the apostles and their first disciples never trod on that burning soil ; and although they certainly traveled on all sides around it, they entirely neglected the neighborhood of the Tower of Babel. There is, it is true, an *article of faith* dear to many Protestants—that Peter never went to Rome, but dwelt in Babylon and evangelized the country ; but it is only a sad mockery of truth, without a particle even of probability.

Did, in fact, the disciples of Christ, who had received the injunction of teaching all nations, forget the most ancient, and never think of reuniting the families of mankind on the spot where they first separated ? We cannot consent to accept such a supposition, and must try to unravel the entangled skein, and bring light where it seems obscurity is greatest.

First, we have the affirmation of Joseph S. Assemani that “the Syrians and Chaldeans consider as their apostles, in the first place, the Magi, the first-fruits of the Gentiles, who adored Christ our Lord in Bethlehem, and afterward Peter, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, and Lebæus or Thaddæus.” There is certainly in this enumeration a superabundance of what we are looking for. And we confess to a preference for this richness of belief, rather than the barrenness of those accounts which pass entirely over the name of any apostle, in regard to a country so near to, and so well known in Palestine. Yet this very copiousness of information renders the truth of it less probable. It must be remarked, however, that the universal traditions of any nation with respect to those who first brought them the good tidings of the Gospel, ought to have a great weight with all those who know thoroughly human nature, and its tenacity of memory concerning what has affected them in the beginning, and given the first impulse to their social and religious life. Thus, the traditions of the Syrians ought to have some weight on the question.

A particularity which renders it more probably true, at least with respect to Thaddæus the apostle, is the great number of texts, from Syriac or Greek authors, referred to by the Bollandists, *de Sancto*

*Thaddæo, apostolo.* These authors all say that “St. Jude (Thaddæus) preached in . . . Mesopotamia.” Some of them render the meaning of it more expressive by saying *toti Mesopotamiae prædicasse*, not limiting his preaching to Edessa or Nisibis, as other texts might be understood to do. Many Latin ecclesiastical writers concur in the same statement, with the Greek and Syriac documents, and among them St. Jerome and Ado.\* It is not likely that such an unanimity of attestations, which cannot certainly be referred to one or two original sources only, should be the result of error or delusion.

It must be confessed, however, that after the announcement of this first apostolic ministration in Lower Mesopotamia, there is in many modern ecclesiastical histories a complete silence with respect to the progress of religion, and the spread of Christianity in the same countries, until we hear of Nestorianism in the fifth century; and the old renowned spot where the division of mankind began, becomes at once the center of a vast proselytism in the East, surpassed only by the outburst of Catholicity in the West; so that the Nestorian patriarch, sitting either at Ctesiphon, or Bagdad, or Mossul, appears almost like another pope, at the head of very numerous Christian, it is true, but alas, schismatical and heretical, churches in the Orient. This wonderful phenomenon, whose description is so calculated to amaze, and of which it is the time and place to say here, at least, a few words, cannot have originated from nothing; and consequently, between the first and the fifth centuries, the history of Christianity in Babylonia and Chaldea cannot be a blank. The only question is, Is it possible to reconstruct it from facts discovered in this and the last age? Can we rely on conjectures founded on the real history of Upper Mesopotamia, and well grounded in the researches of modern Orientalists from the time of Joseph Simeon Assemani, down to our own? This is the task we now propose only to begin, leaving the bulk of it for the chapter on Persia.

The assertion has been made, with respect to Edessa, that not only Christian schools flourished very early in the city, but likewise, monasteries existed in Lesser Armenia, out of which many missionaries carried the faith to the surrounding countries. Did none of them go down the Tigris and Euphrates toward Lower Mesopotamia? Have we still reliable documents with respect to both schools and missionaries? It is sure, that in case even all those documents had

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\* Edit. Rosweide.

perished, we would yet have a preponderating probability on our side. The most natural road that offered itself to those early propagators of Christianity, was the one which followed the course of those noble streams ; in fact there were two, the first of which passed near Edessa, and the other through Nisibis ; and as, in the fifth century, when Nestorianism arose, we find suddenly numerous bishops in Chaldea, embracing it on account of their opposition to Eutychianism, and suddenly beginning that great work of proselytism which carried their missionaries in all directions except the West—namely, as far as the limits of Arabia in the south, the shores of India, and the confines of China in the east—it amounts almost to a demonstration that the Chaldean churches had been already established for a long time, and some unknown circumstances must account for the silence of history on the subject. But we are not reduced to conjectures and probabilities in a matter so replete with interest. First, it is to be remarked that the greatest Syriac authors whose works we still possess, or whose life is best known, showed a marked predilection for asceticism, which must have begun very early in the country. The whole biography of St. James of Nisibis, until he became the bishop of his native city in spite of himself, is the narrative of a most austere monastic life. Read the description given of it by Fleury, from the most reliable ancient authors.\* And if all those details are merely those of the life of an anchorite living in solitude, still, in the eighteen discourses he wrote in the Armenian dialect, which we still possess, the sixth, “On devout persons or ascetes,” shows that in his time true monastic customs were flourishing.

The same is manifest from the biography of St. Ephrem ; only the proofs here are overwhelming, and the demonstration may be said to be complete. This holy man was a monk all his life ; he contented himself with receiving the order of deacon, and refused to take a higher rank in the hierarchy. From him we learn that the schools in Lesser Armenia were mostly under the direction of monks, who consequently were not hermits, but lived under the obedience of an abbot—an archimandrite. Of all his works that are extant—and the collection comprises six volumes folio—a considerable part is addressed to monks or written for their benefit. The reader is particularly struck with it in reading his *cantus funebres*. These are most beautiful effusions of holy grief and Christian hope poured out

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\* Hist. Eccl., livre xi. § 8.

in the presence of the mortal remains of his friends and acquaintances, on the day of their burial. Eulogies on the life of persons of all ranks are contained in these short but most affecting discourses. And frequently those whose virtues he celebrates are monks of the most austere kind. This is so often the case, even for children and young men, that the impression remains on the mind of the reader that this portion of Syria must have been covered with monasteries and convents. In all the instructions which the holy man gives, in other parts of his works, to the inmates of these pious houses, he insists chiefly on the virtue of obedience ; so that he speaks really of cenobites and not of anchorites. All the details of his exhortations prove it, and were we to quote them we would have to detain uselessly the reader on a subject which no one can deny.

But it may be objected that Ephrem lived only in the fourth century, does not speak of the proselytism in which these monks were employed, and particularly does not even hint that many of them ever went to evangelize the south of Mesopotamia ; our present question consequently does not seem to have made a step in advance by all these details. A few more particularities will give a sufficient explanation of this difficulty.

Among those schools of Edessa referred to previously, there was one which was not specially mentioned, because this present moment was precisely the occasion to speak of it. It was called the Persian school, and became in course of time the focus out of which Nestorianism spread south and east to both ends of Asia. From the biography of Alexander Accæmetes—to which there will be occasion in due time to return—we learn that the youths of all the surrounding countries were sent by their parents to the literary institutions of Edessa. The Persian school must have been particularly devoted to those coming from Persia. In Upper Mesopotamia this name—Persia—was invariably given to Lower Mesopotamia or Chaldea, because this portion of the country belonged in general to the Persian kings, whilst the north was annexed to the Roman Empire. It is consequently manifest that the “Persian school” of Edessa gave instruction to a number of young Chaldeans, who after completing their studies went back to their country, no doubt, to help in the diffusion of Christianity. The teachers of this school must have been Chaldeans ; and Ibas, and Maris, so celebrated in the history of the “Three Chapters” must have, more or less, been connected with it. Many circumstances of their life prove it.

There is, however, a difficulty which must be removed : That Christianity flourished in Chaldea, in the fourth century, is acknowledged universally ; its earlier existence is the only thing which must be proved. To this we must turn our attention, and the previous details appear most useful for this purpose. The precise time when the Persian school was founded at Edessa cannot now be ascertained ; but the biography of Alexander Acæmetes can easily clear up the difficulty. It was written by one of his monks, and has been published by the Bollandists.\* Joseph S. Assemani vouches for the authenticity of the document. Details are given in it of the inner life of a Syrian monastery in the fourth century ; but we find particularly a remarkable phrase which testifies that the same had been the case for a long time anteriorly ; so that the origin of the monastic schools in Lesser Armenia must go back several centuries at least before the fourth. Dr. König of Freyburg, in Breisgau, thinks that Bardesanes must have been educated, when a boy, in one of them ; and we know that Bardesanes flourished in the middle of the second century. According to this biography, Alexander began his monastic life about 380 after Christ, and Rabula, whom he converted, and who became subsequently bishop of Edessa, studied in one of those establishments. It is on this occasion that the biographer states plainly, speaking of the schools of this city, that “schools had been founded in Edessa—*jam olim, divino nutu*—that is, very long before, under the inspiration of God, for the advantage of the surrounding countries.” This must evidently refer to an epoch so ancient with respect to the time of Rabula, that the precise date could not be assigned, and all the biographer could say was : *jam olim*. This becomes more evident yet from what follows. The author relates that many “children were sent to these schools, were instructed in the Christian doctrine, and then went back to their country ;” and this had happened already for a long time before the fourth century. But we learn moreover from this document that the propagation of Christianity from Edessa was not intrusted only to the young men who had received their education in its schools. Large numbers of monks traveled in all directions, starting from Lesser Armenia as from a center, to spread the faith, exactly as the Irish monks did in Europe during the eighth and ninth centuries. Alexander, burning with a holy zeal, wished to convert the whole

earth to Christ. The greatest part of his biography relates how he did it. After having founded a convent of four hundred monks at Edessa, divided in four classes, according to their race, namely: Latin, Greek, Syrian, and Egyptian (or Chaldean), he selected seventy-two of them : *qui valebant Gentilibus Verbum Dei prædicare.* The Syriac language was sufficiently understood, it seems, in Chaldea. As to himself, he formed a troop of one hundred and fifty of his disciples, and took them consecutively to Palmyra, to Antioch, and to Constantinople, leaving a number of them in each place to lead the monastic life, and spread the Gospel around. He arrived at his last stage—Constantinople—when Nestorius had just been made archbishop : consequently, before he broached his heresy. All this, therefore, happened when Chaldea and the remainder of the Orient had not yet become tainted by Nestorianism. The “Persian school” was still, consequently, altogether Catholic, as it had been from the beginning ; and we have thus a positive proof that there was a time when the Chaldean Church was orthodox, and had not been separated from the West by its opposition to the Council of Ephesus, and that time embraced several centuries.

But as this is a most important point in the history of the spread of Christianity in the East, as, on account of several unintentional errors of previous critics, an altogether wrong idea has for some time prevailed universally, on this interesting subject, an abundance of proofs must be furnished, so as to leave nothing doubtful and problematical. Most ecclesiastical histories leave a gap of four or five hundred years in the first annals of the Chaldean Church ; and except a few pages on the persecutions of the Persian kings, nothing is said, or appears to be known, of the evangelization of more distant eastern and southern countries. It looks as if neither Indians, nor Bactrians, nor Chinese, in the east, no more than Arabs in the south, ever listened to the words of the true mother of Christians—the Catholic Church—previous to the spread of heresy. All the spiritual teaching those nations received, is supposed to have come from the sectators of Nestorius, who are thus endowed with as great and extraordinary a gift of apostleship, as the messengers sent by the successors of Peter and Paul. Thank God, the veil is lifting up, which will allow us to see the true picture, and if the scope of this work does not permit an exhaustive review of the subject, sufficient details, however, must be given, to settle the question entirely, so as to enable the reader to follow, with more interest and certainty,

the thread of the narrative, when it brings us to the countries beyond those under consideration.

The learned author of the *Bibliotheca Orientalis* was so fully persuaded of the genuineness of the Syrian traditions mentioned above, that he has reconstructed from the remaining fragments of ancient manuscripts the list of the bishops of Seleucia in Lower Mesopotamia, from the very origin of Christianity. "The first," he says, "was Mares, a Hebrew disciple of Thaddæus, who governed the Persian Church during thirty-three years, converted thousands of Jews and Gentiles, and built, it is said, more than three hundred churches and chapels." It is known from other sources that Jews were numerous in Babylonia; their synagogues in this country were nearly as flourishing as in Northern Egypt; and their learned men were second only to those of Alexandria. Caligula, afraid of their power and their turbulent spirit, expelled them from Babylon, then under Roman sway, and it may be that the new Christian converts suffered with them, since the Romans of that period could not distinguish between Christians and Jews. The monster who succeeded Tiberius on the Cæsars' throne felt a peculiar aversion for the Hebrew race. That feeling was increased tenfold when he heard that the Jews of Alexandria refused to render to his statue the divine honors; and to punish them, probably, Avidius Flaccus was made governor of Egypt, whose cruel persecution is described by Philo in his book *Adversus Flaccum*. The Jews of Chaldea, exiled from Babylon by Caligula, dispersed themselves over the whole country, and a great number of them may have become Christians; so that it was proper that a Hebrew should be appointed first bishop of Seleucia, as is asserted by Assemani, who calls him Mares. Thus in all probability Chaldea was evangelized in the very time of the apostles, under Thaddæus.

In another chapter of this work will be found a more fitting occasion to go with Assemani through the succession of the metropolitans of Seleucia, as given in his *Bibliotheca Orientalis*. It will suffice here to say a very few words on the Chaldean Church during the hundred years which preceded Nestorianism, in order to prove how unfounded is the opinion, almost universal until lately, that all the Christian churches established in the far Orient in the first ages of our era, were due to missionaries sent by the heretical archbishops of Seleucia. The well-ascertained date of 498, when Babæus, the Chaldean Patriarch, embraced the errors of Nestorius, must be kept

in view by the reader, and a correct impression on the subject will be the result. All his predecessors on the patriarchal throne of Seleucia had been Catholics.

Constantine, in a letter to Sapor I., which we will have presently occasion to quote, supposes that there was then a very large number of Christians in Persia, and this was at the beginning of the fourth century, nearly two hundred years before the apostasy of Babæus. Sozomen \* asserts that, "through the labors of monks from Mesopotamia, nearly all the Syrians, and a great number of Persians and Saracens, had been brought to the Christian religion from the superstitious worship of devils ;" and Assemani proves that these " labors of monks " began, certainly, before the year 320—no one knows how long before. Under Tamuza, who was raised to the archiepiscopal see of Seleucia, either in 363, or in 380, several monasteries and bishoprics were founded in the country of the Saracens, west of the Euphrates, one at least among the Benu-Salih, a tribe originally from Yemen. Tamuza died in 392, and after the see had remained vacant two years, Cajuma was elected patriarch ; but he resigned five years later, in a council of bishops presided over by St. Maruthas, bishop of Tagrib, or Tekrit, a city on the right bank of the Tigris (lat.  $34^{\circ} 35'$ ). This council was held at Seleucia, in the year 399, the first of the reign of Iezdegerd, the whole country being still Catholic ; for Arianism is not known to have penetrated so far east, and the errors of Nestorius and Eutyches had not yet been broached, or at least, spread eastward. More details are preserved of another Council of Seleucia, held in 410. Forty bishops are known to have been present at it, under the presidency of St. Maruthas ; and a great impulse was given in it, to the spread of Christianity in Southern Mesopotamia and Arabia. Had the acts of those councils, and of previous ones, as well as the decrees of that of Ctesiphon, in 420, been preserved, we might know more precisely how the religion of Christ penetrated into the farthest limits of the East. Disconnected particularities of the kind begin now to reach us.

There were in 334 Christian bishops in Tus and Merv—two cities of Central Asia, not very far from Bokhara and Samarkand—and one of these two sees became an archbishopric in 420. The reader knows that this took place long before Nestorianism invaded the East. The proofs of all this will be given later on.

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\* Lib. vi., cap. 33, 33, 34.

A remark first made by the Bollandist Fathers in their tenth volume, of October, must be here insisted upon; namely, that the apostasy of Babæus in 498, followed by a number of his clergy, did not carry with it that of all Catholics in Chaldea. For a long time after this fatal epoch—498—a great number of Christians remained attached to the true faith; and this is proved beyond question by the persecutions which followed, chiefly those of the last Sassanidæ. Some of them were most cruel and barbarous, and an untold number of victims perished, yet not a single Nestorian suffered. They, on the contrary, continued to enjoy the favor of the government. It is, therefore, a well-ascertained fact that until the Saracens came—several centuries later—a large number of Catholics continued to exist in Persia; and it is the height of injustice—which we admit is here unintentional—to attribute the spread of the Gospel in the East, even during the sixth century, entirely to the zeal of the Nestorians, as if all ardor of proselytism had died out in the heart of those who were at the time shedding their blood for Christ; as if, even to escape the scourge of persecution, none of them could think of quitting the country, and carrying the Gospel with them beyond the limits of the Persian sway, in the country north of India, and in India itself.

But the Bollandist Fathers, without touching even on these considerations, present a series of reflections on the subject most appropriate and suggestive. We cannot give them *in extenso*, and must refer to the *Acta Sanctorum*. Still, some short quotations may be interesting to the reader: \* “When an abbot or a bishop becomes a schismatic, it does not follow that all those under his charge become schismatics at once; but only those who follow him after they become fully aware of his falling away. For the great number of simple people questions of doctrine or of jurisdiction are above their ken, and in following their pastor, who, they have reason to believe, is in the right, their simple conscience renders them free from the crime of schism or heresy.” Papebroch adds: “If this be true of monks, who are so familiarly conversant with their abbot, how much more is it the case with respect to the Russians, for instance, who, differing so much in language and customs from the Greeks, are not bound to know if the Greeks and the Latins are united or not.” And this reflection of Papebroch with regard to the Russians, justly applies likewise to all Oriental nations.

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\* Tom. x., Oct., p. 166.

All this being well considered, the existence of large bodies of Christians, established very early all over Asia, as far almost as its eastern limits—which becomes more and more evident from the study of ancient manuscripts descriptive of the spread of Islamism as far as the desert of Coby and the north of China—cannot be attributed to Nestorianism alone, but must have been mostly the work of Catholic missionaries. Large communities of Christians existed there in the eighth century in the midst of numerous Buddhists ; and those early churches can as well be ascribed to missionaries anterior to Nestorianism, as not. But we maintain that the spread of this heresy itself, as well as the cruel persecutions of the Persian kings, would alone enable us to prove that Christianity had spread in the country before the division of sects began. These two facts must be considered apart, for a moment. A far more thorough discussion of the question is reserved for a subsequent chapter.

1. The spread of Nestorianism from Chaldea must be first considered. The Persian school of Edessa having become altogether imbued with the principles of the heresy of Nestorius, was closed in 439 by the Monophysite Zeno, and its teachers and pupils were dispersed. They took refuge in Southern Mesopotomia ; and the see of Seleucia or Ctesiphon became henceforth the patriarchal center of the sect. It is not precisely known for what reasons Babæus, head of the Persian Church at the time (in 498), embraced its errors. His predecessor, Acacius, was the last Catholic archbishop of Seleucia. It is probable, that besides the popular opposition to Eutyches, the founder of Monophysism, political considerations entered into the change. The Persian kings received with open arms men who, driven away by the Emperor of Constantinople, could not be suspected of entertaining feelings of affection for their former persecutors ; and the refugees from Edessa, meeting with kindness in their reception by the Sassanidæ, were encouraged to persevere in their heretical tenets by the pleasant prospect of a high favor at court. And so, indeed, it turned out to be. The Persian kings increased in violence toward those of their Chaldean subjects who remained faithful to the universal Church, as they suspected them of attachment to the autocrat of Constantinople, and the persecution which had raged at different times, that is, whenever Persia and Rome were at war, became tenfold more cruel, and was soon turned into a real butchery. The Nestorians met, on the contrary, with every kind of encouragement, and soon established in Chaldea, schools organized on the

pattern of their former Syrian establishments. The literary culture spread by them all over the Orient has not been sufficiently appreciated, and it is only of late that the real extent of the protection they received from the Persian government has been ascertained. These institutions flourished to such a degree that during the whole period of the Sassanidæ the youth of the country was intrusted to them ; and when the Saracens came and subdued Persia they received from the Nestorian clergy the first elements of those sciences which afterward shed such a luster on the Mussulman Arab ; they had not forgotten that Mahomet himself had received instruction from Sergius, a Nestorian monk.

The total separation of Chaldea from the Greek and Roman Church, which took place much later, has unfortunately spread over its early religious history a vail which can scarcely now be lifted up, and we ignore entirely the first efforts of its proselytism in the East. The details, however, furnished by Cosmas Indicopleustes are well calculated not only to surprise, but to amaze. Cosmas was first an Alexandrian merchant, who, for the purpose of trade, traveled all over Asia and a part of Africa, as far south as Ethiopia ; and at the end of his life he became a monk, and wrote what he had seen in his distant expeditions. He lived at the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century, and finished writing his *Topographia Christiana* in the year 536. His book, published by Montfaucon, in the *Collectio nova Patrum*, is certainly replete with false ideas of geography, and his system of cosmography is one of the most fanciful that can well be imagined ; but apart from this he has never been accused of giving a false account of what he saw ; and his descriptions of Egypt and the Nile, of the interior of Asia, of India particularly, and of the island of Ceylon, which he visited, are now recognized as true, and such as he must have seen them. Sir James E. Tennent in his *Christianity in Ceylon* does not speak lightly of what Cosmas had said of it in the sixth century.

All this being well understood, it is surprising indeed, to hear from this early traveler, that there were then Christian churches, bishops, priests, in Hindostan, in Arabia Felix, at Socotra, as far north as the country of the Bactrians, and among the Medes and Elamites. He states positively that there were Persian Christians in Ceylon, and their priests were chosen by themselves, on account probably of the distance from any bishop or metropolitan.

By consulting the book itself an idea struck the author which has

escaped many writers who speak of it ; Cosmas does not say—as they all seem to imagine—that the churches which he saw or heard from were Nestorian. He never alludes even to Nestorianism. On some occasions he intimates that such a church, for instance, received its bishops and priests from Persia. That is all. But we know that the Persian school of Edessa was closed in 439 ; it was only in 498 that Babæus, Archbishop of Seleucia, declared himself Nestorian, and carried with him the Chaldean Church, which has been heretical only since that epoch. The precise origin of the spirit of propaganda, which became afterward so remarkable among Nestorians, is unknown ; but it is evidently impossible that already, in 536—so soon after 498—all the details given by Indicopleustes could be due to the sectators of the new heresy. Moreover, this date—536—is that of the publication of his book, not of his travels. He can very well have seen many of the facts which he relates, before or about 498, when the Chaldean Church was just embracing Nestorianism through her metropolitan. The consequence is evident. What Cosmas saw was not an aggregate of Nestorian churches and institutions, but had been founded long before, and when the Church was not yet split into antagonistic sects. The Persian Church was then Catholic. The opinion entertained by some learned men of our time must, therefore, be true : that a great number of bishops' sees had been founded very early, in the remotest parts of Asia ; and some of them may be ascribed to apostolic times : thus, the apostleship of St. Thomas in India is not an unfounded tradition. More will be said on the subject in its proper time and place.

It would be preposterous to imagine that a country deprived, until that time, of Christian knowledge, would directly, as soon as inoculated with the Nestorian heresy, without having ever been Catholic, be filled with such an ardor of proselytism as to carry the Gospel, in a few years, as far as the eastern limits of Asia. The extensive testimony of Cosmas Indicopleustes, compared with the time he traveled and wrote, vouch sufficiently for the conclusion that the numerous churches he met with all over Asia had been founded long before Nestorius appeared.

But the fact of the spread of his heresy, so full of a grave meaning for Christians, did not escape some learned men of our day, who looked at it with a very different kind of interest. Baron Alexander von Humboldt wrote on the subject of the literary influence of Nestorianism over the Arabs, the following remarkable lines : “ It was

ordained in the wonderful decrees by which the course of events is regulated, that the Christian sect of Nestorians, which exercised a very marked influence on the geographical diffusion of knowledge, should prove of use to the Arabs, even before they reached the erudite and contentious city of Alexandria, and that, protected by the armed followers of the creed of Islam, these Nestorian doctrines of Christianity were enabled to penetrate far into Eastern Asia. . . .

“The school of Edessa, a prototype of the Benedictine schools of Monte Cassino and Salerno, gave the first impulse to a scientific investigation of remedial agents yielded from the mineral and vegetable kingdoms. When these establishments were dissolved by Christian fanaticism under Zeno the Isaurian, the Nestorians were scattered over Persia, where they soon attained political importance, and founded at Dschondi-Sapur, in Khusistan, a medical school, which was afterward much frequented. They succeeded, toward the middle of the seventh century, in extending their knowledge and their doctrines as far as China, under the Thang dynasty, five hundred and seventy-two years after Buddhism had penetrated thither from India.”\*

We have passed over a short paragraph where the author of *Cosmos* pretends that “the Syrians had acquired a knowledge of Christianity only about a hundred and fifty years earlier than the Arab invasion, through the heretical Nestorians.” It is impossible to crowd together a greater number of historical errors in so short a phrase; but the remainder of the passage is exact, and deserved to be quoted.

It is evident from all these facts that Christianity must have existed in Chaldea very early, and that the Syrian traditions gathered in the East by Assemani tell the truth without almost any exaggeration, and thus the mission of St. Jude all over Mesopotamia, including Babylonia, becomes a fact. The same impression is conveyed by the letter which Constantine wrote to Sapor I., directly after his conversion, to induce the Persian king to use a tolerant policy toward his Christian subjects: “I hear from good source,” he said, “that this glorious society of men, of Christians, I mean, for whom alone I have undertaken to write this letter, adorn by their presence and virtue *the greatest part of Persia*.” This was said by Constantine at the beginning of the fourth century, long before Nestorianism arose.

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\**Cosmos*, vol. ii., p. 578, et seq., Bohn’s edit.

2. The persecutions, however, which soon followed, furnish a still stronger proof of the same fact. The great number of priests and bishops, and the multitude of Christians, who perished, suppose that the religion of Christ had taken deep root in the country, and had already endured in it for a long time. All the details furnished by the precious manuscripts brought to Rome by Joseph S. Assemani, prove that prosperous churches had flourished everywhere in Chaldea long before these persecutions began. Later on a great deal more will be said on the subject, when it is a question of the evangelization of interior Asia.

#### *7. Origin of Christianity in Cappadocia and Pontus.*

Of the countries around Palestine where the faith of Christ penetrated directly after Pentecost, of the nations which had thus the privilege of being the first-fruit of apostolic preaching, there remains only to consider the extensive district situated northwest of Syria, and called Cappadocia and Pontus. The previous chapter has initiated the reader into the peculiarities of the numerous tribes spread over this eastern half of Asia Minor. The barbarous customs still existing, the diversity of origin and of language, the peculiar kind of idolatry and the influence of a special and extremely powerful priesthood—circumstances mentioned expressly by Strabo, an eye-witness—rendered the evangelization of this large district a work of extreme difficulty.

None of the nations which immediately surrounded Palestine presented a single one of those characteristics. The first labors of the apostles could not have prepared them for this new field of zeal, except that all offered the common characters of our humanity. But the race-divergences between the tribes of Palestine, Syria, and Chaldea, on the one side, and the motley groups of half-barbarous peoples inhabiting the wild districts of Cappadocia and Pontus, on the other, could not well be greater anywhere on earth. Yet a good part of these populations was very early brought by St. Peter himself to the faith of Christ; and the labors of St. Paul in a part at least of the same territory gave such a solid footing to Christianity, in a country until that time more than half-barbarous, that some of the greatest doctors of the Greek Church were subsequently born in it, or adorned it by their virtues and talents. Of this number it is sufficient to mention the names of Gregory of Nyssa, Basil, and Gregory Nazianzen.

St. Peter, unfortunately, in the epistle he wrote to the new converts of Cappadocia and Pontus, does not give us details sufficient to make us acquainted with the circumstances of their conversion. But from what is known of the idolatry then prevalent in those wild regions, it is presumable that Christianity met with a severe opposition from the rich and influential sacerdotal class. It was only under Tiberius that this country was annexed to the Roman Empire. During the long domination of the Seleucidæ in Syria, it was governed by a great number of petty sovereigns, who left it in the social and moral state introduced by the Persian kings. Artaxerxes Memnon had brought in among them the worship of Anahid, called by Herodotus *Venus Urania*; her cult was spread over a great part of Asia, chiefly south of the Caucasus, in Armenia, Media, and Asia Minor. Strabo has already told us what number of priests and "sacred servants"—*ἱερόδουλοι*—were employed in her temples. In Comana of Pontus, particularly, the festivals of the goddess were celebrated with a pomp comparable only to the extraordinary display of Hindostan and Egypt. In Phrygia, a part of the same country, the worship of Cybele was renowned for its impure and inhuman rites. It had been introduced in Rome as early as the second Punic war; but although the Roman polytheists themselves blushed at the infamy of the *Galli*, it never reached in the West the depth of turpitude attached to the name of Corybantes in the East.

The chief attraction of this superstition in Asia Minor consisted in dances, in which an immense number of people joined with religious fury. The details, as they are given by antiquaries, cannot be reproduced here; and we have already mentioned that, according to Strabo, human victims were immolated to the goddess, in his time. The Persian sovereigns, instead of interfering, had encouraged these excesses; and Rome did not feel disposed to meet trouble on this account in that remote part of her dominions, at a time when she had not abolished herself the impious rites of the *Campus Martius*.

All these circumstances argue the existence in those countries of a kind of polytheism most difficult to extirpate; and the power of a rich and numerous priesthood, combined with the sensual fanaticism of a people long addicted to the most enticing superstitions, must have opposed powerfully the introduction of a religion perfectly incomprehensible to the mass of the population. Yet in a few years numerous churches flourished in this country. We abstain from

particulars, because the whole of it soon became a network of Greek Christian communities, and the detailed mention of it will come more naturally when describing the evangelization of Hellenic countries.

The next chapter will introduce to us the consideration of Africa ; and another proof will be offered of the divine power inherent in the Church to conquer human obstacles of the most forbidding kind ; and to fulfill old prophecies by spreading instantaneously her mild sway over a dark and barbarous continent.

NOTE.—The origin of Christianity in Chaldea has been slightly and very imperfectly sketched in this chapter. A great deal more will be added in the seventh, when Persia comes under review. As it is from Seleucia chiefly that the Gospel spread over Central Asia and Hindostan, it is of extreme importance to clear up all difficulties with respect to the line of succession in that see, and to show how far Nestorianism had a share in the evangelization of Asia. The *Bibliotheca Orientalis* of Joseph S. Assemani has been in great part misunderstood by Catholic historians. It is most opportune to give to the book of the good Maronite monk its proper weight in such an important matter as this. Another material result of these researches will be to prove that Asia had not been forgotten in the Divine plan. The enemies of Christ's name often speak triumphantly of the useless efforts made by Catholic apostles for the conversion of that continent. When the time comes for treating of the subject, the whole affair may present itself under a different aspect ; and the reader of this part of our work will do well to forbear for a while from imagining that nothing more can be said than what is contained in the few pages which he has just perused.

## CHAPTER VI.

**EARLY SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA—ORIGIN OF MONASTICISM IN EGYPT—ITS INSTITUTIONS VINDICATED.**

THE first dissemination of the Gospel in Palestine, and the surrounding countries, was carried on under the chief direction of Peter: In Jerusalem and among the Jews; in Samaria and Galilee, through the half-pagan and half-Hebrew tribes, formerly transported by the Assyrian kings; on the sea-coast, from Cæsarea as a center, through the Philistines of the south, by the aid of Philip, the Deacon, and all along the Phœnician coast, northward; farther up, toward Asia Minor, among the Greeks of Antioch, and the neighborhood; in the east, through Mesopotamia, north and south, by the instrumentality of Thaddæus or St. Jude, whose epistle is but a repetition of the first of Peter; finally, through the wildernesses of Cappadocia, Phrygia, and Pontus, among tribes addicted to the rites of a debased Oriental polytheism, Simon Peter is seen displaying an incredible energy, preaching by himself, or by other apostles and disciples, the Gospel of his Master to all races of men, whatever might be their language, religion, culture, and habits. In a few years the great Semitic race, in all its branches, with many tribes of other lineage, disseminated among the primitive occupiers of the soil, had received, through Peter, the doctrine of Christ. Churches, at least, were certainly established in the chief cities of that immense territory. The great patriarchal See of Antioch, founded by Peter, who first occupied it, according to the most positive tradition of the East and West, was destined, in the designs of Providence, to convert the whole of Asia, and thus fulfill the brilliant prophecies recorded in the Old Testament. But for the free play of the passions of men, which have retarded their fulfillment, the extreme limit of the greatest continent would soon have been reached. The word "retarded" has just been used advisedly; the final evangelization of Asia cannot be but the work of time.

On turning now toward Africa, the reader naturally asks : Who among the apostles received for his mission the duty of bringing that great continent to the feet of Christ ? For the *mission* of converting the world was given to the apostles. If any of the disciples were to share in the noble enterprise, they were to act under a superior control, and that the control of an apostle. The question is a fair one, and must be answered : Had any one of the twelve received the commission of converting the numerous races of the African continent ? If we turn to all ecclesiastical histories, there can scarcely be found an answer to this ; in several of them there is not even a statement of the question. As the history of Christian Chaldea begins for them with Nestorianism, so for Africa, after a word is said of St. Mark, a complete silence is kept until the time of Origin and St. Anthony. Are we, in fact, reduced to this ?

To meet the question promptly, we merely say : the mission of evangelizing Africa was again intrusted to Peter, who used his disciple Mark for the purpose. Not a single word of the New Testament can be quoted to prove this ; but there is an overwhelming tradition to support it. First, there is the universally-spread belief concerning the founder of the Egyptian Church, and the first patriarch of Alexandria. It is St. Mark, the disciple of Peter. Whoever, of all ecclesiastical writers, ancient or more modern, has spoken of the rulers of this great patriarchal see, has never failed to refer its origin to St. Mark ; and this, among the Greek and Syriac, as well as among the Latin Fathers. It is absolutely impossible to find a single author who has rendered a different account of the origin of the African Church, who has even hesitated about it. Here you do not meet with the phrase : It is reported, It is said, used by any one except by the critics of our time, who seem to place their skill in doubting of what has never been a subject of doubt before.

If this universal voice was not simply the echo of truth, no one would be able to say how Christianity originated in Africa ; and yet the Egyptian Church was not founded in a time of myths, of legends, among ignorant and barbarous people. Alexandria, during the two centuries of the dynasty of the Ptolemies before Christ, and for four hundred years afterward under the Romans, was undoubtedly the most intellectual and learned city of the whole world. Rome even could not be compared to it in this regard. The literary and philosophical schools of its Museum, as it was called—we would say its university—were frequented by the studious youths not alone of

Egypt, but of Syria, of Greece, of Italy, of the whole world, in fact. Its library of seven hundred thousand volumes, its renowned and well-paid professors, its chairs on every subject then thought worthy of investigation, attracted not only young men, but, in general, all men desirous of looking into the mysteries of science and art. The Jews themselves preferred it to Jerusalem as an intellectual center ; the Hellenes left the benches of the academy at Athens empty, to flock together in the splendid halls of the Alexandrian Museum. The Christian Church of this city, from the end of the second century, when Pantænus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen were at the head of its catechetical school, became the most brilliant proof of the conquests of Christ over the intellects of men ; yet, not a single writer is found assigning any other origin to the whole of it than St. Mark, the disciple of Peter.

We know what critics say : that except Eusebius and Jerome, no ancient author can be quoted stating positively his belief in that tradition. We answer that Epiphanius must be added to these two ; and three such names are worth a host of common ones. We answer, besides, that the testimony of Eusebius of Cæsarea is irrefragable in this, that, being himself a great admirer of Origen, he could easily know what the African doctor had stated of the Church of Alexandria to his friends, Theoctistos of Cæsarea, who had ordained him priest, and to Alexander of Jerusalem, who had been, together with him, a scholar of Clement of Alexandria. Cæsarea and Jerusalem were places dear to the author of the *Hexapla*. He spent a long time in those two cities, fifty years only before Eusebius ; and many of his friends in Palestine were yet alive in the time of this last author. It can, therefore, be reasonably concluded that the testimony of Eusebius is equivalent to that of Origen himself. The critics who bind us to such a strict rule to ascertain truth, profess to admit that if Origen or Clement of Alexandria had openly spoken of St. Mark as first Bishop of Alexandria, they would easily acknowledge it themselves. The author of the *Ecclesiastical History* must have learned from the friends of Origen what he knew on the subject ; and the statement of the one can be considered as the statement of the other. The Alexandrian Fathers never wrote on the history of their church. Is it not strange that even the most severe critics should require that the *Stromata*, or the *Pædagogue* of Clement of Alexandria, or the *Refutation of Celsus*, and the *Principia* of Origen, should refer to a fact which does not naturally come in the scope of those works ?

Had the writers done so, it would probably have appeared to their contemporaries an idle statement, altogether uncalled for, and simply puerile, as every one was then perfectly well acquainted with it.

It is, therefore, undeniable that St. Mark founded the Church of Alexandria. But who was St. Mark? He was not an apostle, and consequently the mission of converting Africa had not been given him by our Lord; he must have received it from some of the apostles, to whom alone the office had been handed over by Christ to "teach all nations." Who was, therefore, the apostle from whom he received his mission? All antiquity tells us it was Peter. Papias, quoted by Eusebius,\* said Mark was converted by the apostles after the resurrection of our Lord; and he wrote his Gospel at the request of the Romans, who wished to have from him a record of the teaching of St. Peter amongst them. These were the assertions of Papias, a contemporary of the apostles. St. Irenæus calls him—on that account, probably—"the disciple and interpreter of St. Peter;" and Origen and Jerome say that he was the same Mark whom St. Peter calls his son in his first epistle. It would be useless to quote more authorities. But it is sufficient to add that, besides what is said of his writing the "Gospel of Peter," many Fathers likewise state positively that it was from him, also, that he received the mission to Africa, and was consecrated first Bishop of Alexandria.

The patriarchate of this city has subsisted until our day. In the fifth century Eutychianism and Monophysism invaded it; a part, however, of the population remained faithful to Constantinople and Rome. From that time down to this there have been two lines of patriarchs, one orthodox, called also Melchite, the other Eutychian or Jacobite. Later on, when Photius and after him Michael Cerularius succeeded in their schismatical projects, and tore away from Rome the Greek-speaking world, the few who remained faithful to the Church received their pastors from the center of Catholicity. This state of affairs subsists yet; and three lines of archbishops rule at the same time over the Christians of Egypt. But all proclaim that St. Mark was the founder of the see and came from Rome. Can a tradition be more firm, consistent, and unassailable?

What was the state of Egypt when St. Mark arrived, and what have been the fruits of his labor?—is our next question. The state of Egypt is perfectly well known, and the fruits of his labors are

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\* Hist. Eccl., lib. 8, c. 39, and lib. 9, c. 16.

attested by the surprising change that soon took place, and likewise by the short narrative of his "Acts" which is far from deserving the contempt of critics.

1. *A short description of Egypt in the first century of our era.*

In a previous chapter, a sketch has been drawn of the unchangeableness of the strange country of the Pharaohs, and of the apparently ineradicable superstitions which disgraced it; but several things have been left unsaid, as the object was then to describe chiefly the races of men dwelling along the Nile. Under Nero, when St. Mark landed in Africa, Egypt was a province of the Roman Empire, but had been so for less than a century. Rome, all historians say, pursued there the policy of the Ptolemies, which was extremely favorable to the development of the country. It had scarcely ever been so prosperous under the Pharaohs; Létronne in France and Heyne in Germany have showed it conclusively. The description of the solemnities by which Ptolemy Soter celebrated the admission of his son Philadelphus to a share of his throne, read like an Arabian tale; yet they are contained in the *History of Alexandria*, by Callisthenes of Rhodes, a contemporary, if not an eye-witness. The strength of the army and navy of Egypt, as stated by Appian, was nearly equal to that of the Roman Empire in its greatest splendor. The commerce of the country may be said to have embraced the whole world; and the harbor of Alexandria was crowded with ships from almost every country under the sun. Dio Cassius, in a *Discourse* to the inhabitants of that splendid city, did not hesitate to say as reporting a fact of every-day occurrence: "I see among you not only Greeks and Italians, with Syrians, Libyans, Cilicians, Ethiopians, and Arabs, but likewise Bactrians, Scythians, Persians, and even some Indians, who come, as it were, to meet together in your city."

Under the Ptolemies, the whole of Eastern Ethiopia, even to the sources of the blue Nile, in the West, was annexed to Egypt. The king had two fleets, one on the Mediterranean, the other on the Red Sea, whose chief object was to trade with the country we now call Abyssinia. For this last object, Philadelphus opened two new harbors on the Arabian Gulf: those of Berenice and Myos-Hormos, with a road for caravans from Berenice to the Nile itself, across the country. This well-attested fact will enable us, later on, to understand how Christianity could early penetrate into the Ethiopia of Axum.

But the chief particularity which must attract our attention is what regards religion. It is well known that as long as the Persians were masters of the country, they interfered with the Egyptian worship as much as could be done at a time when the process of that rigorous persecution was yet unknown, which prevailed later on under the Roman emperors and the Persian Sassanidæ. The first step of Cambyses, when he conquered Egypt, had been to take away from the priesthood their extensive privileges, and particularly the large revenues they enjoyed to carry on their expensive worship. This measure was insisted on the whole time Egypt remained a province of Persia. Many of the magnificent temples, whose ruins Europeans yet admire, had been, if not destroyed—it would have required too much time and money to do it—at least deprived of their chief ornaments. An immense number of statues and mystical figures had been taken away and scattered through the Asiatic provinces of Persia, when their bulk allowed them to be removed. These attempts at persecution had, at all time, soured the temper of the Egyptians against their masters, and were often the cause of bloody rebellions. In all these emergencies, however, the oppressed people had never been enabled to break off the yoke, and had to submit to its hard fate. They, however, remained faithful to their national polytheism.

The first move of the Ptolemies, when they reached power after the death of Alexander, was to restore to the priesthood their former privileges and revenues, even including the right of judging the kings after their death. This last ceremony surely was a mere form, and no number of priests, however great, sitting as judges, would have dared to refuse the funeral honors to the most infamous of their new sovereigns, as many of them undoubtedly were. Nay, they gave them all the divine honors, not only after death, but even during their lives. Yet this privilege, although a merely nominal one, was appreciated far beyond its full value by a grateful people. We may rest assured that this conduct of the new dynasty of kings led to a new development of the old polytheism. The reader may judge of the effect produced on the whole nation by the restoration of more than three thousand *simulacra* or statues of gods, which Ptolemy Euergetes brought back with him at the end of his victorious expedition through Syria, Asia Minor, and Cilicia! It is said that two thousand five hundred of these idols had been taken away from Egypt by Darius, and six hundred by Cambyses; the places where

they had stood during many ages in Egypt had remained empty. What exuberance of pagan piety must have been witnessed when they were replaced in their former proud position ! The whole nation gave, on this occasion, to the king, the name Euergetes—Beneficent—under which he is known in history.

With all their domestic and social crimes, the Ptolemies, chiefly the first three of the line, showed themselves great princes and wise rulers. They wished certainly to introduce Hellenic polytheism in the country, but without wounding the feelings of the people. The Greek cities of the Delta, Alexandria particularly, were full of Grecian temples, in which Grecian rites were performed ; the remainder of the country was thoroughly Egyptian in worship. In spite of the infatuation of Herodotus, who saw in the deities of the Nile the exact reproduction of those of Olympus, there was in fact a vast difference between them. Something was to be done by the Ptolemies to combine both kinds of idolatry, and smooth down the religious asperities which estranged the Egyptians from the Greeks. Soter invented a senseless fable for the purpose ; and it seems that the fable was believed. Serapis, an Oriental god, but, as it appears, with Greek idiosyncrasy, was worshiped at Sinope, in Paphlagonia—some say it was at Pergamos, in Mysia. He was the proper god to constitute a link between the two religions. But, of course, his worshipers at Sinope refused to give him up, even to an Egyptian king. Suddenly, however, a ship arrived in the harbor of Alexandria with the god on board ; it was reported and believed that although made of stiff marble, yet he had come of his own accord, without the aid of pilot or mariners, to the great surprise and regret of the Sinope pious pagans.

An immense and magnificent temple, called the Serapeum, was built to receive and enshrine him. They say that it was worthy to be compared to the gigantic edifices erected long before by the great Rameses. It was certainly one of the wonders of Alexandria ; and the festivals of the god were celebrated with a truly Oriental pomp. We do not remember to have seen anywhere the precise peculiarities of this new idolatrous cult, which was early introduced in Rome, where it flourished, until Tiberius, we think, put an end to the superstition, on account of a shameful imposture related at length by Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews*. But if the ritual of the worship of Serapis is now unknown, the object of Soter in introducing it into his kingdom, plainly stated by all historians, tells us

that it must have combined the festive exuberance of Greek polytheism with the solemn and gloomy grandeur of Egyptian superstition. All efforts must have been made to give to the religion of the country a more artistic and humanizing aspect ; to introduce into all the temples, even those of Upper Egypt, something of the Hellenic sprightliness and festivity. But all was in vain ; Serapis did not harmonize the two religions ; and it is a fact that the god himself, in spite of kingly patronage, could never be admitted in the Egyptian Pantheon. This circumstance alone proves the vitality of the old errors in the soil where they had reigned for so many ages, and continued to subsist in spite of the long oppression of the Persian domination. Yet the worship of a crucified God, introduced by Mark, a stranger and a Jew, soon swept away every vestige of Egyptian idolatry, so effectually and completely, that it has required the deep studies of many men of profound intellect, to make us acquainted at least with the chief features of the mythology and ritual which disclosed their splendor under the Pharaohs.

It is true that the greatness of the Ptolemies, compared to that of the old kings, was unsubstantial and almost imaginary. All the pride of festivities, of immense wealth, of military and naval pomp, of science and art even, was in fact empty ; because it was the work of the energy of the kings alone, in which the people had no part whatever. The decline of the Egyptian nation, as described in *Gentilism*, was irremediable and final, as long as it remained polytheistic. The Ptolemies had many ships, and many troops of soldiers, and immense treasures, and swarms of philosophers and artists ; they had no nation to back them ; and when the hour of conflict with Rome arrived, they fell ingloriously and forever. Yet, how can it be said that there was no nation ? Did they not show by their attachment to their old religion, by their refusal even to modify it—only to the extent of a syncretism with the Hellenic golden error—did they not thus prove that they had a will and could be said to be alive ? The answer to this question, as to their national life, must be negative, because their ancient religion was altogether a dead system reduced to an impotent naturalism, and incapable of giving energy to the nation. Amun had, long ages before, ceased to be the Supreme God ; and Amun-Ra (*Helios*), so often sculptured on their monuments, could not inflame them with patriotism, after he had left them so long at the mercy of the Persians. Ptolemy, who restored to them the open worship of Amun-Ra, did not believe in it himself, and had brought

his Serapis to delude them. How could there be a substratum for national life in such a patchwork of religion? And as nothing else among the people had any life whatever, they could not even attempt to resist when Rome came in upon them, and brought in a few legions at the mouth of the Nile. Thus they fell. Still, had it not been for Christianity, their superstition might have endured for long ages, as it was deeply rooted in the very Egyptian nature.

Rome, therefore, took Egypt under the protection of her wings, and gave peace at least to the country, and the beneficent policy of the extinct dynasty was continued by the new masters. The new *régime*, it is true, was not so brilliant as the previous one; because Egypt under Rome was only a province, and under the Ptolemies it was apparently an independent kingdom. Yet the fields were teeming with abundant harvests; the banks of the Nile became the granary of Rome; and the industry of the ingenious manufacturers of the neighborhood of Memphis was set to work, to adorn Roman patrician ladies with the transparent textures confined formerly to the luxurious taste of the dissolute females and noble dames of the country. Philosophy continued to flourish in the halls of the Museum of Alexandria, and the harbors of the city were, as ever, crowded with ships that had come from every quarter of the globe.

### 2. *Origin of Christianity in Egypt.*

This was the Egypt that St. Mark found when he arrived, and which was to be thoroughly Christianized in a few centuries. For, the extirpation of polytheism from the country can be said to have been more thorough than in Rome itself. Under Theodosius, the temples were nearly in the state in which they are now—immense ruins; and Christ was worshiped in all cities, and in an immense number of lauras, hermitages, and monasteries, built in the most solitary places. The thoroughness of the Christianization of Europe during the middle ages, is the only exact example which can be given of that of Egypt in the fifth century; the reader will soon have occasion to be convinced of it.

After this concise sketch, we can understand the Acts of St. Mark, which give a very simple but very comprehensive account of his labors. They have been published by the Bollandists from twelve manuscripts, and are supposed by experienced critics to have existed in Egypt in the fourth or fifth century. Bede had them in

England, and important fragments of them have been preserved in his writings ; the *Oriental Chronicle*, too, made use of them. No one, consequently, has a right to make little of them, and consider them as altogether spurious. If the proofs of their genuineness would not be sufficient to establish it with as much certainty as the most authentic “*Acts of Saints* ;” still, the grounds of it are as firm as those which support the great majority of the facts we believe with an historic faith. This, in a few words, is the simple history :

St. Mark landed in Cyrene, in Pentapolis, in the seventh year of Nero ; and by his preaching, and many miracles, he converted a number of Hellenes of this prosperous Greek colony. From that shore of Libya, he passed over directly to the Egyptian Thebais, where he found himself in the midst of a revived polytheism, occupying yet all the great temples built formerly by the Pharaohs. His ministry around Thebes, and along the Nile north and south, employed twelve years of his life, during which he founded many churches, known afterward in the ecclesiastical history of Egypt. It was only at the end of all these labors that he went north to Alexandria, where he converted many Jews and pagans.

Fleury\* thinks that the Therapeutæ, not existing before, were the first members of the Christian Church founded by St. Mark ; but in this he was mistaken ; as a word or two will presently show. Still, there can be no doubt that the presence of the Therapeutæ around Alexandria helped for the conversion of many, and was probably the cause of the first impulse toward monasticism which certainly existed in Egypt long before St. Paul and St. Anthony.

The martyrdom of the saint is given in those Acts with great simplicity and truthfulness. He was buried in the neighborhood of Alexandria ; and a church was built on the spot in 310 ; to which, according to Palladius, almost a contemporary, a holy priest of the name of Philoromus made a pilgrimage from far-distant Galatia, at the end of the fourth century, in order to visit his tomb.

The whole narrative of these Acts is redolent of simplicity and truthfulness. St. Mark, according to them, preached to the pure Egyptian race in the Thebais, during twelve years, before he went to Alexandria, to convert Hellenes. But even in that great city all were not Greeks—only a third part of the population—the other two-

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\* We quote occasionally this author, because he is generally reliable for the first six centuries. For later times he has no authority whatever in our eyes.

thirds were either Jews or native Egyptians. It can be confidently believed that these last, the children of the soil, were not forgotten by the apostle, and that the Christian Church in Egypt, from the start, counted them among its members. Of men of Latin parentage there is no mention whatever. The Romans, in fact, were always few in the country. They comprised, probably, only the officials and the garrisons; exactly as the English do at the present time in many of their colonies. These remarks are of importance in the course of the actual considerations, because the historians of these early ages of the Church generally suppose that Egypt, being under the power of Rome, it was merely a question of converting Romans. This would be equivalent to the supposition that a Catholic missionary sent by the Pope to Hindostan, at this time, would imagine that to bring the country to Christ, he would have only to convert the few Englishmen living in it.

With respect to the Therapeutæ, it was stated in the preceding chapter that they were a branch of the Essenes, a Jewish sect at least two hundred years older than Christianity. They could not, consequently, have originated from the first converts of St. Mark at Alexandria, as Fleury believed. Their life, described minutely by Philo and Josephus, was that of a strict asceticism, but entirely of a Jewish character. Yet it does not seem that they ever were a cause of trouble for the Christians of Egypt, as were the Essenes in Palestine, from whom came the Ebionites. The Therapeutæ broached no Christian heresy; their way of living was of a contemplative cast, never given to industry and agriculture, as was the case with the Essenes. They dwelt mostly in the country around Alexandria, and very probably suggested to the first Christians the idea of an eremitical life. Many of them, no doubt, embraced the new religion, since we have positive proofs that the Essenes of Palestine themselves joined the Church of Jerusalem, into which they introduced the agitations of Ebionism, so as to be felt even in the Germany of our day, by the speculations of the Tübingen school concerning the "Petrine theology." The Therapeutæ of Alexandria must have experienced, still more than the Essenes of Palestine, a strong inclination for the devout, prayerful, and heaven-born religion of Christ. Their hermits' cells, spread broadcast in the country around Alexandria, and dotting here and there along the banks of the Nile, or around the Mareotic lake, the groves of date-palms so abundant in Egypt, must have often sheltered sincere Christians,

and pious worshipers of the incarnated Son of God. There are signs yet all over the country indicating the existence in former times of private cells, lauras, or large monasteries, not only around Alexandria itself, not only in the desert south of it, where later on the monks of Nitria dwelt, but all along the various branches of the Nile in the Delta, and farther south on both banks of the noble river, as far down as the Thebais and far-distant Syene. The Therapeutæ proper were never known to have spread farther than a few miles from Alexandria ; so that cells and lauras at such great distance from it must have been occupied formerly by Christians ; and we see in the fact under consideration the well-attested proofs of a growing monasticism from north to south, starting from the neighborhood of Alexandria itself, and consequently from the seat of the Therapeutæ, who thus came into contact with Christianity at its origin. The connection and network of both seem to result from ruins and *débris* existing still in the country ; and as history remains entirely silent with respect to the way the Therapeutæ disappeared, the conclusion is forced upon the mind that, in the end, they all became Christians, and realized at last what Fleury thought was the case from the start, an ascetic Church, going back in time as far up as St. Mark himself.

At any rate it would be a great error to imagine that there were no hermits in Egypt before Paul, to whom the title is given of "first hermit." From the beginning of Christianity there was everywhere a number of pious persons who led a life of prayer and continency without leaving their home, and quitted the world even whilst remaining in it. They were called generally ascetes—*ἀσκηταί*. This was the case in a great number of Christian families in Rome during the second and third centuries ; many females who had devoted their virginity to God, died martyrs, because of their refusal to receive another husband than Christ. The East, chiefly Syria and Egypt, was full of them from the beginning of the second age of the Church. St. Ignatius of Antioch, in his letter to Polycarp, written probably in 106, thus expresses himself on this very subject : "If any one can persevere in continency—*εν αγνείᾳ*—in honor of an incarnate Lord, let him do so with a sincere humility ; whoever boasts of it is lost." Several passages even taken from the epistles of St. Paul could very well bear the same meaning. Athenagoras, in his *Apology to Marcus Aurelius*\* in 177, asserts posi-

tively the same fact: "Many men and women among us reach old age, living in continency, in the hope of thus securing a more intimate union with God." Some of the most charming pages of the history of the primitive Church are merely simple descriptions of an angelic life in the midst of the world. St. Agnes is a bright example of it.

But it was probably in Egypt that the true eremitical life appeared first, and that the Christian ascetic quitted his house and family to live by himself in a sequestered spot, on some occasions never to leave it until death. And since the Therapeutæ had certainly led the same kind of life for two hundred years before Christ, as Philo Judæus shows, we indulge the hope that modern critics will not think it a stretch of fancy and an unwarranted supposition, if we strongly incline to believe that either the Christians imitated very early the life of those Jewish ascetics, or that many of these last became Christians, and continued still afterward to live in the solitude of their cells.

What the world witnessed in Egypt, in the middle of the third century, under the reign of Decius, and under Diocletian in the fourth—when the persecution drove into the desert multitudes of people who first embraced an eremitical life, before their number induced Pachomius to introduce the cenobitical rule—was an outburst of piety to God, which cannot appear on earth except on very rare occasions. But long before, many had already chosen to live with God in solitude, and to devote themselves to asceticism and prayer; and this we believe to have been the first stage of Christianity in Egypt, chiefly around Alexandria; further proof of it will be presently given. The pagan inhabitants of this populous city may have confounded them with the Therapeutæ; and the philosophers of the Museum may have despised them as illiterate and unable to understand the Platonic philosophy; still, they increased in numbers, and when persecution came, as early as Marcus Aurelius, but more conspicuously under Decius, they were known as Christians, and they had over them a ruler, an archbishop, called later on a Patriarch. The line of those holy men remained unbroken since Mark, the founder. Subsequently, it is true, it was not so easy to give it entire, as was the case for the line of Popes in Rome; yet there is scarcely a serious doubt about the succession of Patriarchs in Alexandria. The unanimous tradition which renders absolutely certain the apostleship of St. Mark, is likewise the sure warrant that his suc-

cessor was Anian. Nine archbishops after him carry us to Demetrios, under whom the great Alexandrian school was founded toward 180 ; and from that epoch the succession of the rulers of the Church of St. Mark cannot possibly give rise to any objection. We say the Alexandrian school of Catechisms was founded under Demetrios, toward 180, and Pantænus was the first teacher. This statement, however, must be qualified ; for it seems certain that this school was really organized by St. Mark, and continued without interruption after him ; only it was then limited to the instruction of catechumens, and all its object was fulfilled by preparing the candidates for baptism and the other sacraments.

But under Demetrios a new idea offered itself to the rulers of the Church, which gave at once to the school the pre-eminence it kept for several centuries. It was the time when the pagan schools of the Museum were at the acme of their renown. From the time of Ammonius Saccas and his disciple Plotinus, the great expounder of the system of emanations, abysms, and depths, to Proclus, the "heir of Plato," as he was called, the Neo-Platonist school of the Museum maintained its intellectual supremacy over the whole world. Rome herself, at the time so great and powerful, witnessed nothing of the kind within its walls, and sent many of her sons to be educated in Egypt. To quote an unknown writer in the Dublin Review (Oct. 1864) : "The strife of words then never ceased in the lecture-hall, in the garden of the departed Ptolemies, round the banquet-table, where the professors were feasted at the State's expense. The fame of Alexandria then gathered to her Museum the young generations that succeeded each other in the patrician houses and wealthy burghs of Syria, Greece, and Italy. They came in crowds, with their fathers' money in their purses, to be made learned by those of whose exploits report had told so much. Some came with an earnest purpose. To the young medical student, the Alexandrian school of anatomy, and the Alexandrian diploma (in whatever shape it was given)—not to mention the opportunity of perusing the works of the immortal Hippocrates in forty substantial rolls of papyrus—were worth all the expense of a journey from Rome or Edessa. To the lawyer, the splendid collections of laws, from those of the Pentateuch to those of Zamolcis the Scythian, were treasures only to be found in the library where the zeal of Demetrios Phalerius and the munificence of Ptolemy Philadelphus had placed them. But the majority of the youths who flocked to the Museum came with no other purpose than

the very general one of finishing their education, and fitting themselves for the world. . . . Pagans as they were, they were the fairest portion of the whole world, for intellect, for manliness, for generosity, for wit, for beauty and strength of soul and body—natural gifts that, like the sun and the rain, are bestowed upon just and unjust. Their own intercourse with each other taught them far more than the speculations of any of the myth-hunting professors of the Museum. They crowded in to hear them, they cheered them, they would dispute and even fight for a favorite theory that no one understood, with the doubtful exception of its inventor. But it was not to be supposed that they really cared for abysms or mystical mathematics, or that they were not a great deal more zealous for suppers, and drinking-bouts, and boating parties. These latter employments, indeed, may be said to have formed their real education. Greek intellect, Greek taste, wit, and beauty, in the sunniest hour of its bloom, mingled with its like in the grandest city that, perhaps, the earth has ever seen. The very harbors, and temples, and palaces were an education. The first rounding of the Pharos—when the six-mile semicircle of granite quay and marble emporia burst on the view, with the Egyptian sun flashing from white wall and blue sea, and glancing and sparkling amidst the dense picturesque multitude that roared and surged on the esplanade—disclosed a sight to make the soul grow larger. The wonderful city itself was a teaching ; the assemblage of all that was best and rarest in old Egyptian art, and all that was freshest and most lovely in the art of Greece, left no corner of a street without its lesson to the eye. Indoors, there was the Museum, with its miles of corridors and galleries, filled with paintings and sculptures ; outside, the Serapeion, the Cæsareum, the Exchange, the Palace, the University itself, each a more effective instructor than a year's course in the schools. And after all this came the Library, with its seven hundred thousand volumes !

“ In the year of our Lord 181, ships filled the great port, merchants congregated in the exchange, sailors and porters thronged the quays ; crowds of rich and poor, high and low, flocked through the streets ; youths poured in to listen to Ammonius Saccas, and poured out again to riot and sin ; philosophers talked, Jews made money, fashionable men took their pleasure, slaves toiled, citizens bought and sold and made marriages ; all the forms of busy life that had their existence within the circuit of the many-peopled city, were noisily working themselves out. In the same year Pan-

taenus became the head of the catechetical school of the patriarchal Church of Alexandria."

Was it an epoch very distant in point of time from the birth of Christ? Exactly the distance which separates us from Queen Anne; and we know all the details of the public and even private history of England in that age, from the high and low debates of Whigs and Tories, to the form of the dresses, and the vulgarities of the taverns haunted by the wits of the period.

Was it an epoch very distant in point of time from the death of the last apostle, St. John? Exactly the distance which separates us from the outburst of the great Revolution in France, in 1789; there are yet men living who were born before that day.

And between the two epochs—the origin of Christianity, actual object of our study, and the very time we live in and we know so well, there is precisely the greatest resemblance in every possible respect. There is the same extensive knowledge of things and men, the same ardor of investigation in every intellectual pursuit, almost the same facility of intercourse with the remotest parts of the civilized world, the same acquaintance, among educated men, with foreign tongues, the same unrest and nervous agitation toward the future, the same ardent look into mysteries and problems of every sort.

We can say, therefore, that the day which saw Pantænus entering his Christian school-room, to counteract the doctrines of Ammonius Saccas and Plotinus in the Museum, was almost the day following the death of John in Ephesus, or even the morrow of the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. There is, it is true, the terrible author of *Supernatural Religion*, who has discovered a portentous argument against Christianity in the fact that during the first fifty years of the second century scarcely any notable Christian author can be found, connecting the apostolic age with the following centuries. It is true, likewise, that many non-Catholic writers find several flaws in the argument, and Mr. M. Arnold himself, so favorably disposed toward the conclusions of the celebrated author, has nevertheless erudition enough to quote a number of texts rather startling and hard to explain in the new theory. But in our opinion there is no need of so many learned researches in the literature of that period. The Christians of the year of our Lord 175 had literally joined hands with those of the beginning of that century, and could know perfectly well all the details of the preaching of the apostles a few

years back. Many of them could say what Irenæus asserted of Polycarp, in equivalent expressions : "I see yet in imagination the very seat on which he used to recline ; I hear yet the very words he addressed us ; and although it is a long time ago, and I was very young, it looks to me as if it was but yesterday." The Christians were not all rustic men, unacquainted with the world except that of their village or hamlet ; many of them traveled far and wide, read and pondered over the books they held in their hands ; although newspapers did not exist, their curiosity to know what passed in distant countries was, at least, as great as ours, and many of them enjoyed even in their time many means of information. The conveyance of letters by public mails existed for them as for us, and it was then the custom for friends, when one went abroad, to load themselves with "epistles," and come back home with a "load" of answers.

To imagine, therefore, with the author of *Supernatural Religion*, that the first fifty years of the second century was a total blank with respect to information, on the part of Christians, because, forsooth, very few books or documents written at the time have come to us, is an unwarrantable supposition, contradicted by all we know of the period ; and to conclude that there was in consequence a total break of Christian discipline and dogmas during that momentous half-century, so that the Christian ideas and belief of Irenæus, for instance, were totally different from those of Papias and St. John, is flatly opposed by the facts we know. The author of the book, to be sure, does not mention the particular antagonism just mentioned, because it would have been suicidal on his part ; but it is an immediate consequence of his pretended discovery.

Pantænus, therefore, an historical personage of the early Egyptian Church, stands in bold relief under Demetrius, one of the first successors of Anian and Mark in the See of Alexandria. But what was the object of the particular duty assigned to him by his archbishop ? He was not the first to direct the school of Catechisms : no one has ever said that he was. Before him others had held a somewhat similar position ; but the older teachers of the school confined themselves to catechumens, to those who presented themselves with a view of embracing Christianity ; the school was, henceforth, to be open even to those who did not express any such intention, but merely wished to know what Christians had to say.

Henceforth the intellectual center of the world, the Alexandrian

school would not be entirely pagan ; there was to be a Christian branch, which would in course of time throw in the shade that of the Museum. The intention is not to enter into any details on the teaching of the successors of Pantænus, chiefly on Clement of Alexandria and Origen ; this would be almost foreign to the subject. But a most important consideration—since we speak of early Christianity in Egypt—is the solemn and open entering of Holy Church so soon in the highest domains of intellect and science ; and this took place in the old land of superstition and mystery, at the time of a brilliant revival of polytheism and pagan philosophy in Egypt.

The Church had, no doubt, already long before, offered herself as the great “enlightener.” St. Paul had, from the start, announced that although he professed not to know profane philosophy, still he came, “to bring into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ.”\* St. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, had been dead a number of years when Pantænus began to teach ; and at the very moment he opened his school in Alexandria to the whole learned world, Irenæus in Gaul was publishing his great work on heresies, and inaugurating that long series of doctors of whom the Church has a right to be proud. But both Justin and Irenæus were individual thinkers ; Pantænus was the first of a body of teachers destined to continue for several centuries. The future great doctors of the Eastern Church were to receive their first intellectual impulse from the Christian establishment inaugurated by him.

Two prominent features of the Church in the early ages were her doctors, and her ascetes or monks ; the first devoted to the establishment and propagation of the faith, the second to the practice of all virtues, so as to raise at once for all a high standard of morality. Both appear in Egypt as early as, if not earlier than, in any other country. And thus we have a right to conclude that the faith spread in Egypt at the very beginning of Christianity. At this moment we consider particularly the great intellectual feature of the Church, “reducing,” as St. Paul said of himself, “all intellect unto the service of Christ.” This had never been known before of any social or political institution. The schools of philosophy in Greece could not be compared to it, on account of the heterogeneousness of their doctrines. The great writers of antiquity in any nation whatever, were likewise unconnected units, and never announced preten-

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\* II. Cor. x. 5.

sions to paramount authority. The priesthood of the Gentiles was a mere ritualistic and ceremonial institution, without the least assumption of dogmatic teaching. But suddenly, all over the world, in the whole Roman Empire certainly, and beyond it in Persia, Armenia, Scythia, Central Asia, and India—as we shall see—men arise with a universal affirmation on their lips: “We are your teachers.” And strange to say, they all agree in their doctrine; or if some pretended doctors, according to the prediction of Christ, endeavor to cover themselves with the clothing of lambs when they are in reality wolves, the unanimous voice of the true teachers warn the new converts of the fact, and ward off from them the danger of error. This striking fact alone would give to Christianity the pre-eminence over any other corporate body whatsoever. The privilege of teaching appears in the character of the rulers of the Church from the very origin. In the apostles it was most remarkable. Those who succeeded them in the episcopacy received it in full; and it has continued to the same extent until our day. Not only all bishops and priests have always propagated Christianity by preaching, but from the very beginning great “teachers” have made the Church glorious by the splendor of their doctrine, and the erudition and deep thought visible everywhere in their writings. Long before the “age of doctors,” as it is called, this has been the case; and the Alexandrian Fathers were not yet known, when remarkable books appeared and attracted the attention of mankind. Some of them have come down to us to excite our admiration; the greatest number have perished, and we know them only by a few fragments preserved by subsequent writers, or by the mere mention of the names of their authors. Hermas and St. Justin at Rome, Athenagoras at Athens, Bardesanes in Syrian Mesopotamia, Quadratus, Aristides, Hegesippus, Philip, Melito, Dionysius of Corinth, the author of the epistle to Diognetus, all living previous to Pantænus and Clement of Alexandria, in the East, and to St. Irenæus and Tertullian in the West, can be proudly pointed out by the Church as men of genius, and of a great elevation of mind. The Church had created a literature of her own, which soon superseded entirely the previous pagan literature, and the beginning of it must be carried back as far as St. Paul, St. John, and St. Luke. This is perfectly true, and in this sense the “age of doctors” has always been actually existing in the Christian Church; yet there are occasions when this astonishing privilege shows itself more conspicuously; and thus we say that after the age

of martyrs in the Church came the age of doctors. Who has not seriously reflected on the large number of great men, great writers, and great preachers, who have illustrated the Church from the third century down to the sixth? They appear at once and simultaneously in the East and in the West. In the East, among the Egyptians, Syrians, Armenians, and Hellenes. In the West, in Italy, Gaul, Spain, and Western Africa. They originate a new literature when that of paganism is dying out. New ideas, sublime thoughts, heavenly doctrines, consoling hopes, and the purest morality replace at once the brilliant delusions of Hellenism, the patriotic polytheism of Rome, the sensual pantheism or Sabeism of the Semitic races, the enigmatic idolatry of Egypt, and the snake-worship or fetishism of North Africa or Mauritania. What is chiefly remarkable in the comparison of the new with the old, is that in the old state of things—in Gentilism—everything was confused, heterogeneous, antagonistic, and bewildering to reason and propriety. In the new—the emerging of that fresh Figure with heaven in her eyes and persuasion on her lips—everything is consistent, homogeneous, precise; acceptable to the mind and soothing to the heart. The great doctors of Syria, of Armenia, of Egypt, speak exactly like those of Asia Minor, of Hellas, of West Africa, of Gaul and Italy. A considerable part of that holy, fresh, and elevating literature has come down to us, never to perish, but to delight, instruct, and console all generations of men of good faith to the end of time. Yet what immense losses have we not to deplore! Of how many precious gifts have we not been deprived by the inroads of time and the ravages of barbarians? Probably more than half the sublime works of Ephrem of Syria have not come down to us; a large part of the productions of the noble African doctors of Alexandria has forever perished. The enumeration might be tedious did we try to go through all our losses in Asia Minor, Greece, Cyrene, Cyprus, Thrace, Italy, Africa, and Gaul.

Of all that galaxy of united genius and holiness, the first stars which appeared shone in all their brilliancy between Lake Mareotis and the Pharos. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, later on, Athanasius, were the great men destined by the providence of God to lead away captive the highest intellects of their age, to attract from the halls of the Alexandrian Museum to the unpretending rooms of their Christian school the hearers of Ammonius Saccas, of Plotinus, of Jamblicus, and the greatest of all, Proclus. The Church then took, as

was proper, the proud position of the Leader of thought ; and having once taken her place at the head of the intellectual world, she made up her mind to keep it forever, in spite of the noisy opposition of brawlers, intent on the only object of bringing back among men the mental anarchy which existed before her arrival.

It is impossible to ascertain what effect the sublime teaching of the Alexandrian Christian school had on the eventful prostration of Egyptian paganism which soon took place. Our present object is to describe the speedy disappearance of that almost eternal superstition, which sprang under the first Pharaohs of the most early dynasties, and was revived, as was seen a few pages back, by the patronage of the Ptolemies. It looks at first sight as if the masters of the catechetical school had more to do with the enlightenment of the learned Greeks and Romans, than with the worshipers of Amun-Ra and of Isis. Their very primary object was to attract the students of the Museum, and among these there were undoubtedly more votaries of Dionysos and Aphrodite than of Serapis and Phtah. This, however, might be a mistake ; and there is no doubt in our mind that they did not neglect the part of their duty which regarded the pure Egyptian race, so numerous around them, and so powerful yet a few miles south of Alexandria and Memphis.

First, the reader must remember that Egyptian mythology was not spurned and despised by the Syrians, the Greeks, and the Romans of the period. It would be a great error to think so. It had always been a subject of deep study for the Hellenes ; and many centuries previous to the age under our actual consideration, the learned Greeks did not consider their education finished unless they had spent a considerable time in Heliopolis and Memphis, to receive the instructions of the priests of Phtah. The garrulous Herodotus and the highly imaginative Plato have told us unmistakably what advantage they thought they had derived from their long visit to the banks of the Nile. At the period of time we now study there was undoubtedly among the Greeks and Romans of note a revival of that admiration for Egyptian worship and philosophy. Such was, in fact, the ardor of all for diving into the mysteries of the myths of Amun and of Isis, that as it was not convenient for many to cross the seas and expose themselves to the heat of that burning climate, and the strangeness of customs so different from their own, the religion and philosophy of Egypt had been transferred to Rome, Edessa, and perhaps Antioch. Apuleius in his *Asinus aureus* shows conclusively

how far the belief in the fables of Memphis and Thebes, as well as in those of Phrygia and Phœnicia, had invaded the rationalist countries of the West. Josephus, likewise, and several Latin authors, mention the existence at Rome of temples dedicated to the cult of Isis and of Serapis. Great patrician ladies were often infatuated with those superstitions ; and men of an infamous character tried occasionally to soothe their conscience, or deceive the public, by a strict adherence to such religious ceremonies as were used in those strange-looking edifices.

If such was the opinion of the great and learned in the outside world, the Fathers of the Alexandrian Church could not look with indifference on that immense number of people living in their neighborhood, often in the midst of them, addicted to superstitions as enticing and baneful as those they tried to abolish among their Hellenic or Roman hearers, if not more so. According to the most exact calculation, one-third of the population of Alexandria was purely Egyptian ; at a short distance from the city, the great mass of the people was composed of natives of the country. We know that for many ages the whole Coptic nation—the descendants certainly of the old Egyptians—have been Christians. If their number at this time is not large in Egypt, there are various causes for it, well known to all students of history. But a few centuries back, there were certainly a very large number of Copts in the country ; and at the time of the Moslem invasion, in the sixth or seventh century, the whole population was certainly Christian, and undoubtedly Coptic or Egyptian. The Alexandrian Fathers, therefore, labored for them, and the soundness of their doctrine, the brilliancy of their learning and acquirements, must have been placed at the command of the greatest spiritual needs of the country. It is known, besides, from Clement of Alexandria, that he had been present at the celebration of their rites. He describes them minutely when he speaks of their hieratic or hermaic books. He must have often witnessed the details of their worship in those huge temples which were then the seat of a solemn pomp, and of sacrifices full of splendor. He must consequently have exerted himself for the conversion of those poor pagans.

The inevitable conclusion must be that if, in the designs of Providence, the display of doctrine so manifest in those great men of Egypt was intended for the good of the whole of mankind, and the spread of the Christian religion all over the world—by enlisting on her side talent and learning, and attracting to her the intellectual

part of mankind—it was meant particularly to subserve the spiritual needs of the Egyptian nation, and was devoted primarily to the welfare of the native inhabitants whom they converted so early to Christ.

### 3. *Origin of Egyptian monasticism.*

To appreciate more thoroughly the nature of the means to which was due the rapid change effected in Egypt by Christianity, the second universal feature it assumed in the most early ages must be seriously considered. This was the large class of hermits or *ascetics*, as they were then generally called. That can be said of Egypt which has been said of Ireland: The monks have actually made it a Christian country, and this from the very beginning. The example of the Therapeutaæ must have been most influential as to kindling this holy fire of an austere piety, from the very times of St. Mark, probably. A few details have been previously furnished which might be considered sufficient, although somewhat conjectural. Another powerful cause of this remarkable asceticism was the Gospel maxim with respect to the times of persecution: “When they shall persecute you in a city, flee into another.”\* This was admitted in Egypt as a universal principle, much earlier than in many other countries. From the time of the first persecutions it was acted upon constantly, and by all; we have frequent proofs of it in the writings of the earliest Alexandrian fathers, in the biographies of many hermits and monks, and above all, in the whole life of St. Athanasius. The only private interpretation they allowed themselves to give to the maxim, was to fly to “the desert” rather than to “another city.” The topography of the country and the great number of old buildings and sepulchers already unoccupied and falling into ruins, invited them to this, as well as to the solitudes extending particularly from Thebes to the Red Sea. Whoever has read the life of St. Paul the Hermit cannot forget the moment when the young man—he was then young—flying from Decius’ blood-hounds into that horrible wilderness of sand, meets with a cave, which he enters; and after a moment’s darkness reaches a spot lighted up by a rent in the rock, where a date palm-tree had found soil enough to grow, and to produce abundant fruit. At a short distance a spring of cool water was rippling on a bed of white gravel; and thus God offered to his

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\* Matt. x. 23.

devout worshipper food and drink which would last him nearly a century. This was but an episode constantly repeated at the time over a great part of the surface of Egypt.

We are not reduced to conjectures with respect to the very early origin of monasticism along the Nile. The reader will find copious proofs of it in the Bollandists' *Life of St. Anthony*. We can but quote a few, but they will abundantly suffice. St. Anthony retired into solitude at the beginning of Aurelian's reign, about 270 ; and St. Athanasius states positively that "before this time there were monasteries in Egypt, although not in so great a number, and there were also anchorites who, however, did not penetrate so far into the desert, but lived alone in the neighborhood of their own *villula* or small farm-house." Many ecclesiastical authors attribute the origin of these early monasteries or hermits' cells to the example of the Therapeutæ ; among others Epiphanius,\* St. Jerome,† Eusebius, Cassianus, etc. The Acts of St. Fronto, published first by F. Rosweide in his celebrated work *De vitiis Patrum*, carry with them a great appearance of genuineness and are thought to have been written by a contemporary monk. Fronto, according to these Acts, lived at the epoch of the Antonines, about 150, and was at the head of a monastery of seventy monks in the desert of Nitria. His life, as described in this most interesting document, looks exactly like a copy of the Therapeutæ's life, such as it was described by Philo in his book *De vita contemplativa*. Hence, several writers call Fronto a successor of these Jewish ascetics. It is certainly very curious to read what Philo said of them, who represents them as "living alone, out of cities, in gardens and farm-houses, adjoining small sacred edifices—σεμνεῖα—or in the neighborhood of conventional houses—μοναστήρια—so that the very word *monastery* came at first from a Jew—in which they gave themselves entirely to the practices of a holy life, not only around Alexandria, toward Lake Mareotis, but even καὶ ἐκαστοντῶν καλουμένων νόμων, "through all the prefectures of the country." The reading of the work *De vita contemplativa* calls necessarily to the mind the much shorter picture of the primitive Church in Jerusalem contained in the Acts of the Apostles ; and when we know what writers such as St. Epiphanius, St. Jerome, Eusebius—whom we cannot find room to quote—said of the Alexandrian Therapeutæ, with respect to the origin of monasticism in Egypt ; when we con-

\* Haeresis, 29.

† De Script. eccl. in Marco et Philone.

sider what the traditions of the Copts, and the ruins yet existing all around declare still in our day, we cannot refuse our belief to this long-denied fact ; and we think it can be maintained that “monasticism, as old as St. Mark, spread Christianity gradually all over the country from the shores of the Delta in the north, to the cataracts of Syene in the south.” Nothing, likewise, explains so naturally and so thoroughly the rapid conversion of the country.

Egypt presents in that regard a singular discrepancy to other primitive Christian states. Everywhere else, almost, the cities were first evangelized and received the faith, occasionally, long before the rural districts had seen the first messengers of God. In Egypt it was the reverse, if we except Alexandria and perhaps Memphis. The whole country, including the most forbidding solitudes, and the most arid regions, was full of worshipers of Christ ; the Thebais itself, the former seat of Amun-Ra, and of Osiris, was thoroughly Christian ; so that the magnificent temples of former ages were altogether deserted, and assuming rapidly the appearance they have in our day, at the very time that philosophers were still wrangling in the Museum, and pagans crowded around the shrine of Serapis in Alexandria.

Although the Egyptologists of our age think generally that the north of the country was as early civilized, at least, as the south, and deny that culture came from Ethiopia ; although they have on their side the existence of the Pyramids, which undoubtedly appear to be as early as, if not earlier than, the gigantic temples of Thebes and Elephanta ; still the monuments of the south began to decay and to be left untenanted, much sooner than the cities and edifices of the north. The Ptolemies may have been in great part the cause of it, chiefly by opening the navigation of the Red Sea toward Abyssinia, which rendered almost useless the road of the Nile toward Meroë. Yet many facts, which it is not the place here to enumerate, go strongly in a direction contrary to the common one, with regard to the original culture of the country, and leave for us the question still in doubt. No one, however, can deny that the modern magnificence of Alexandria in the far north, by centralizing all the resources of Egypt in a small island almost out of the country, left Thebes, Luxor, Elephanta, etc., in the background, and prepared them for ruin and decay. This made the whole interior of the country ready for the holy invasion of the new religion. The population had not even diminished ; the banks of the Nile were then as fertile as ever, and hundreds of thousands of people yet cultivated the soil, and lived in

plenty, surrounded by deserts on all sides. This left ample room for religious establishments of a new kind, and for the fulfillment of the old Hermetic prophecies, recorded with such an exact and sensible insight in the *Asclepius*: "That the time would come when the most holy land of Egypt, formerly full of sacred edifices and magnificent temples, would see them replaced by buildings of another sort, destined to be real sepulchers, where the bones of the dead would receive the veneration of worshipers," meaning evidently the relics of martyrs.

Something was said in a previous chapter on the life of the first monks and anchorites of Egypt, and the strong objections of Mr. Lecky in his *History of European Morals* were mentioned and in part answered. But this is the place to treat the question more *in extenso*, although it would be impossible to give an exhaustive solution of it. It must be said in the first place that Mr. Lecky deserves well of the cause of morality by the stand he has boldly taken against the utilitarian school. Few men, perhaps, will follow him with a complete understanding of the question, involved as it is in the intricate details he has given on all the branches of that moral heresy which has done its best, in all ages, to sap at the foundations of society. But those who can obtain a perfect insight of the question he treats at length, must be grateful for the result of his researches, and the absolute unvailing by him of the mystery of iniquity concealed under the fine phrases and the sophistical arguments of the supporters of what is called *utilitarian morality*. Would to God he was as safe a guide when dealing in particular cases as when he confines himself to generalizations! And even in many general remarks of his, we find, among delightful pictures of sublime virtues, such descriptions as the following: "A hideous, sordid, and emaciated maniac, without knowledge, without patriotism, without natural affection, passing his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, and quailing before the ghastly phantoms of his delirious brain, had become the ideal of the nations which had known the writings of Plato and Cicero, and the lives of Socrates and Cato." This is said of monks in the same page where it is asserted with truth that "no one had more reason than St. Augustine to know the danger of enforced celibacy, yet St. Augustine exerted all his energies to spread monasticism through his diocese. St. Ambrose, who was by nature an acute statesman; St. Jerome and St. Basil, who were ambitious scholars; St. Chrysostom, who was pre-eminently formed to sway the

refined throngs of a metropolis, all exerted their powers in favor of the life of solitude, and the three last practiced it themselves. St. Arsenius, who was surpassed by no one in the extravagance of his penances, had held a high office at the court of the Emperor Arcadius." In the same page, likewise, we read in a note that "the *Historia Monachorum* of Rufinus, and the *Historia Lausiaca* of Palladius, as well as many minor works of the same period, are given in Rosweide's invaluable collection of the lives of the Fathers, one of the most fascinating volumes in the whole range of literature."

This is truly unaccountable. Mr. Lecky, who, in the first passage we have just quoted, draws a picture of monachism truly "hideous," so repulsive in fact that any enlightened and refined reader must be bound to throw away with disgust the books in which they are eulogized, tells us nevertheless that a collection containing only stories of monks is "one of the most fascinating volumes in the whole range of literature"! Mr. Lecky, who, in many passages of the second volume of his *History of European Morals*, comes back repeatedly on the same horrible description of "maniacs without knowledge, without natural affection, passing their life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture," tells us nevertheless that St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Basil, and St. Chrysostom—he might have made the list much longer—all educated, refined, most holy and learned men, devoted all their lives to spreading and encouraging the formation of new monasteries, and the continued success of those already in existence.

Yet Mr. Lecky is profuse in details; he apparently knew well the institutions which he reviles; he supports his assertions by quotations without number; he chooses them so well that his reader is carried with him to the highest pitch of indignation against social customs so *immoral* and depraved. This was certainly his object. Yet he takes all those "details," all those "quotations" from a book which he calls—we repeat it again—"one of the most fascinating volumes in the whole range of literature." And, moreover, the great men whose honored names he brings forward—Augustine, Ambrose, Basil, etc.—knew, also, all these details derived from the above-mentioned quotations; knew more, in fact, since "three of them had practiced that life of solitude;" and we may add, that those of them who had not practiced it, had literally studied it, examined it, seen the practical result of it; yet approved it, favored it, employed all their efforts to spread it, and secure its continued exist-

ence. How is this? Those holy and great men knew certainly what was the morality of the Gospel, and saw nothing in monasticism opposed to it; nay, they thought that the monks practiced in effect the highest morality which the Gospel of Christ inculcates. Mr. Lecky thinks differently: who is right in the present case? This gentleman has certainly a standard of morals; the Fathers had evidently another. Whose side will a Christian of our age prefer?

The author of the *History of European Morals* cannot be called, we suppose, a great theologian; he would smile himself were such a title given him. The Fathers of the Church were all theologians, and those quoted previously were certainly among the greatest ancient doctors of theology—moral as well as dogmatic. This is a first presumption in their favor.

Secondly, what is on the one side the standard of morality which Mr. Lecky has adopted, and how does he apply it to the case of the Egyptian monks; and what was, on the other side, the standard of morality of the Fathers, and how did they apply it? This is a most important question in the matter under actual investigation.

In the whole of his book, Mr. Lecky treats Christianity with what he thinks to be, we suppose, a perfect impartiality. He has written there some splendid pages on the side of Christian truth; but no one who has read him intelligently can say that Christian doctrine is *his* standard; since he does not fail, wherever, with Gibbon or other men of the same stamp, he can find fault with it, to speak out and give his reason for being of another opinion. He has placed himself, therefore, on what he certainly supposes to be a higher ground; so elevated, in fact, that he can judge boldly of Christian morality, and call it to the bar of his tribunal. This is certainly bold; and many have attempted it before him. He is, consequently, one of a group of men who rely on their intellect for discussing and deciding about, not only what is within the range of the human mind, but also what is often above it, and requires a higher authority than that of a human tribunal for a proper decision.

The first principles of morality are certainly in the heart of man, as the great principles of reason are in his mind. But it is now known by the whole expanse of antecedent history, that whoever relies only on both, and does not call, as Plato did, for the guidance of a higher teacher, is in great danger of going astray. And this is true of the sway of the will by morals, as well as of the sway of the mind by truth; nay, it is more really the case with the first than

with the second ; because our passions are always enlisted against virtue, and seldom oppose any obstacle when there is question only of abstract truth. The consequence is, that a great caution ought to be used when writers, even of note and of great talent, present us with moral considerations of high import, which they pretend to derive only from their inmost consciousness. All of us can judge their judgment, and adopt a conclusion different from theirs, apart even from the consideration of revelation ; because every intelligent man possesses in his own interior a standard of morality as high as that of any human writer of talent. This is all that can be said of the standard of morality adopted by Mr. Lecky ; and the state of the case will become yet clearer, when a few words have been said on the way he generally applies that standard to the cases on hand.

We have read attentively the *History of European Morals*, and it is hard to find in it any sure method by which strict conclusions of a moral character can be securely reached. It is, in fact, the same for all writers of this kind : A great amount of strange facts are presented successively to the bewildered reader, without order of any kind ; often without any detail of circumstances, which, as all moralists know, are so important for a rightful decision ; words are purposely chosen to give a bias to the reader in the direction intended by the author ; and at the end of a long paragraph, either nothing is said, yet the practical consequence is clear, or a short phrase, looking like the sharp end of a satire, is indited, and the whole question is settled forever and a day. Yet the whole mind of the writer is not so decided as he seems to be, since he is obliged to confess that the book whence he has taken all those "absurd stories" is "one of the most fascinating volumes in the whole range of literature." Meanwhile, of principles of morality well settled down ; of a strict discussion of facts as going one way or another with respect to the principles ; of consequences derived from the same facts in the line of true morality, not a word is said. Things are called *immoral* which have nothing to do with ethics—as, for instance, the standing of Simeon on his pillar, the neglect of cleanliness which must be judged from the motive—and have scarcely anything to do with the law of God ; and finally, many other particularities, which, differing strangely from our usual fastidious habits, are apt to excite in worldly people more natural abhorrence than even the violation of the most important precepts of the divine law. This is the way principles of morality are stated and applied to particular cases.

If, on the other side, we consider the standard adopted by St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Basil, etc., in general by the Fathers of the Church, and the way they generally applied it, we may find a much stronger motive for admiring instead of despising the abnormal life of the ancient Egyptian monks and anchorites.

First, those great men had a mind and a conscience ; a mind stored with as extensive a knowledge of men and things for their age, as the best writers of our time for this. This is rather a very moderate estimate. It might be said, without exaggerating, that they were accustomed to much deeper thought, used to a great deal more of keen observation, and enriched, in many cases, with a much more varied information—this last particular was certainly true of St. Augustine—than any of the most admired writers whom we know in our age.

And besides a mind of this cast, they had a conscience as keen and sensitive as any one can boast of. They gave to the duties of man a much higher place in the scale of human concerns, than the great majority of philosophical and ethical writers of this day we are acquainted with. Read any of those who rely only on the principles of the “intuitive school,” as Mr. Lecky calls his own—although certainly much preferable to the “utilitarian school”—and you will find none, or scarcely any, ready to admit that death is preferable to what we Catholics call a “mortal sin.” Thus, duty is not placed by them at the very head of human concerns ; but is left at the mercy of some more important one, like the principle of self-preservation, or worse yet, self-indulgence.

Considering, therefore, only the natural and acquired gifts of the Fathers of the Church in the line of thought under consideration, compared with those of the modern writers who assail the monks, they must be, not only admitted on a par, but strictly placed higher up in the estimation of sensible men. But there is a great deal more comprised under the personality of such men as Augustine, Ambrose, Basil, and Chrysostom.

For, secondly, besides their natural and acquired gifts of mind and conscience, they relied on a much safer standard of morality than the mind and conscience of any ordinary man, that is, on the commands of God, manifested by a positive and well-attested authority. They had, in the great majority of important cases, the voice of Scripture and of the Church to guide them, and prevent them from giving wrong decisions. To feel the insecurity, even, of the “intuitive

school" of ethical philosophers, as Mr. Lecky calls it, it is sufficient to read the short sketch he has given, of the various definitions or foundations of virtue, by its chiefs. Butler, Adam Smith, Cudworth, Clarke, Wollaston, Hutcheson, Reid, and Lord Kames—without adding to their names those of Henry More, and Hume, as Mr. Lecky does—are bewildering to the reader, in the various ways they understand the great basis of duty. When, to these English writers, who appear, it seems to the author of *European Morals*, the only ones worthy to be mentioned, we add the opinions of the Greek philosophers of the best schools on *summum bonum*, we are left in a perfect maze of thoughts, differing in many points, if not opposed totally to each other, on so important a topic. And after having passed through this ordeal, is not the reader tempted to exclaim : "I can form to myself a conscience as well as any of those writers, deprived, in fact, of any personal authority" ?

God could not leave us in such an uncertainty as this, and the Fathers of the Church knew it whenever they spoke of things in which morality was concerned. They looked to Scripture, to the analogy of faith and tradition, to the authoritative decisions of apostles, Popes, and bishops ; and all these means of discerning right from wrong were certainly more calculated to satisfy the human conscience than the *ipse dixit* of Butler or Clarke, of Reid or Lord Kames can be in our most enlightened age.

It is true, this way of proceeding is not "scientific," as people say in our day ; and this simple word makes generally a profound impression on all kinds of men who hear it. Most of them have scarcely any conception of its meaning, and all are more or less under a strange misapprehension when it is pronounced. It is, therefore, proper a word should be said on the subject : Anything is scientific which is proved by the principles of science, that is, by unassisted human reason ; and, undoubtedly, many truths, facts, or deductions are of this nature. The whole exterior world can be known to us—as far as it is possible for us to know it—only by the scientific process ; and Holy Scripture expresses it energetically when it says : "God has given up the world to their disputes." The interior facts of our consciousness are likewise left entirely to our rational discussions ; taking care, however, to draw a deep line of distinction between such facts as are merely the play of our interior faculties, and those in which moral conscience is involved. The first, as, for instance, the ascertaining our actual feelings and emotions, the

derivation of one faculty from another, etc., are certainly the proper object of ratiocination alone, and consequently belong exclusively to the sphere of science. The second falls in it again to a certain extent, since St. Paul tells us\* that "when the Gentiles who have not the law, do by nature those things that are of the law, these having not the law, are a law to themselves, . . . . their conscience bearing witness to them," etc. There is, therefore, a natural, that is, a scientific process of ascertaining the principles of morality which have been inscribed in the heart of man by his Divine Author. But we know from a sad experience that our passions interposing many obstacles to a clear scientific deduction in such cases as those of morality, we may easily deceive ourselves, unless we have a safer guide, which has been furnished us by heaven in the Gospel of Christ, interpreted by his Church. Thus, in this field of inquiry the Christian has *science* as well as the rationalist philosopher; but he has, in addition, *revelation*, which here transcends science, and gives him a safer and brighter light. Thus, likewise, in all the metaphysical and ontological questions which can be deduced from scientific or philosophical principles—as, for instance, the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, the existence of bliss or woe in a never-ending existence after this—the scientific process, as it is called, receives a considerable additional strength from that of authority or revelation. There are, besides, truths which reason alone can never reach, and must be revealed to be known to us—as original sin, redemption, etc.—truths which have been, as it were, clothed in real facts, yet so that the human mind cannot explain them, and which remain, consequently, out of, and above, science.

But to come back to the principles of morality, which alone are, at this moment, the object of inquiry, it is proper to insist on this, that the scientific basis on which they stand, and which is the only resting-point for philosophers of the "intuitive" school, belongs to the Christian as thoroughly as to the most eminent sages quoted by the author of *European Morals*. St. Augustine, St. Basil, St. Ambrose, St. Chrysostom, enjoyed as sound a mind and possessed as discriminating a moral power as Butler, Clarke, etc. But those great men had, besides, the light of the Gospel to guide them, and the direction of the rulers of the Church, to whom Christ had delegated his authority. If, therefore, Mr. Lecky or any other writer of the

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\* Rom. ii. 14.

same school should insist, and say that our method of inquiry is not scientific, we would answer that we possess certainly the same scientific method they have, and we use it, but we enjoy likewise the direction of authority to guide us, and this direction coming from heaven, and being, consequently, superior to science, is, nevertheless, always in perfect accord with it, when the noise of passion is subdued, and the unprejudiced voice of conscience can be heard.

To judge, therefore, of the strange conduct of the monks of Egypt and Palestine, we can altogether rely on the holy men—their contemporaries—who praised them, and we can afford to listen with patience to the vituperations of the modern philosophers of the intuitive school. More than this, if we come to the particularities of this ascetic life, it is easy to justify, in the eyes of reason, what seems to many inexplicable and shocking ; and as this way of proceeding accounts fully for the conversion of Egypt, or rather, places it vividly before the eye, and furnishes an abundant proof of it, some reflections on the subject will be most appropriate, and may prove interesting.

It can be said in general, that nothing proves more thoroughly the happy change brought out by Christianity among men, than what took place in Egypt, as well as in Rome. This last moral transformation will come naturally, later on ; we have here to consider the first, which is most striking in the case of the Egyptian ascetics and monks. Separation from the world, austerities, labor, a solitary or cenobitic life, love of the souls of men, charity, in all its most attractive details, finally self-sacrifice, which resume the whole—this is the remarkable spectacle offered in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, in the land of the Pharaohs. Who could have foreseen it under the last Ptolemies ? Who could have imagined that this would happen so soon, when Cleopatra and Mark Antony disgraced both their throne and humanity itself ?

#### 4. *A short vindication of Monasticism.*

a. An almost total separation from the world is certainly one of the most objectionable features of the primitive Oriental monasticism in the eyes of the philosophers of the intuitive school. It is in their opinion “unnatural, selfish, or morally suicidal ; and it caused the benevolent and social nature of Christianity, as preached by Jesus and his apostles, to decline toward an absurd hatred of mankind,

totally abhorrent from the primeval moral doctrine of the Saviour." This, we are sorry to say, is mere declamation and sophism.

*First*, this separation from the world did not originate out of *hatred of mankind*, but became a necessity for Christians, on account of the horrible persecutions of Decius and Diocletian. It is true, what was first a necessity became afterward sweet and attractive, but not from an absurd misanthropy, which never existed in the monastic institutions of Egypt, nor of any other country. To attribute such a feeling as this to the inmates of any religious house in Christendom, is to be altogether ignorant of the real spirit which animates them. It may be said, that this very separation from the world is the true source of a deeper affection for those who live in it; and, in general, the more a religious order seems by its rules to be secluded from the companionship of men, the more ardent is, in the heart of its members, the love of all, prayer for all, and compassion for the most wretched of all.

*Secondly*, what was the meaning of this apparently dreadful separation? merely this: to fly from a most degraded and corrupt world; and to help for the formation, in solitude, of a new and regenerated social order. In Egypt, as well as in Rome, as everywhere, in fact, at the time, moral corruption had reached its utmost limits; and the Ptolemies—chiefly the last four or five kings of the dynasty—had succeeded in Alexandria, as the Cæsars on the Palatine, in bringing on by their turpitudes the moral ruin of the country they ruled over. When one reflects on the death of Pompey, on the unprincipled life of Antony, on the luxurious display of the vices of Cleopatra, on the stupid apathy of the whole people at the sight of those enormities, on the sudden collapse of all social, political, and civil institutions of the land, at the mere breath of such a man as Octavius then was, when he hastened to take possession of the country, there is nothing surprising, nay, it appears but natural and fair, that the virtuous and holy should say: Let us fly into those arid deserts of Thebes and of Libya; let us make our dwellings of those vast and empty temples, or choose for the place of our rest and sleep the very sepulchers of the embalmed dead. Is this such a determination as the philosophers of the intuitive school would call a wrong sentiment, and an anti-Christian feeling? It is but the prompting of human nature, at the same time that it is the deep call of divine grace; and it was only listening to the voice of Christ, who advised his disciples in the days of "desolation" to "fly

into the mountains, and not to return even for the purpose of putting on their coat."

*Thirdly*, this separation from the world was not in the intention of the Egyptian monks absolute, complete, final. The rules of the cloister had not yet been devised ; and either the needs of the people outside, or of the monks themselves, prompted them often to visit again the cities which they seemed to have quitted forever. St. John Chrysostom praised them for coming back to Antioch or to Alexandria whenever the spiritual comfort of the people required it ; and the charitable action of the holy Abbot Macarius, who, to satisfy the cravings of one of his subordinate cenobites walked thirty miles and back to get in the nearest town cakes which the monastery did not furnish, was but one of a number of facts of the same kind. To imagine, we repeat again, that the love of solitude was prompted among them by the "hatred of mankind," is a most false supposition ; and whenever some charitable call brought them back to the world they had left, their looks, their words, their deeds proved that misanthropy was not one of their characteristics, and that, on the contrary, their life in the desert had but intensified in their heart the feelings of humanity natural to all.

But this life of ordinary isolation from the haunts of men was a protest against the low estimate of life which then obtained among the pagans. For these all the aspirations of humanity were confined to this world. To enjoy it was the supreme felicity, and they did not look for another. To be deprived of its paltry enjoyments was the only thing to be dreaded. It was not so at the beginning. During the whole of the patriarchal period, man knew that his true country was not on this earth. The mere sight of the blue vault of heaven brought directly to his mind the idea of God, for whom he had been created, and of a wonderful spiritual world where all his aspirations would be fulfilled. Although wealth was then considered a blessing, sensual pleasures were thought to be a temptation ; and life was simple and frugal in the midst of abundance. What God gave was received with gratitude ; and when it was taken away, man exclaimed with Job : "The Lord had given it, the Lord hath taken it away ; let his holy name be blessed." This we find among all ancient Oriental nations, chiefly among the Indians and the Bactrians. The old Brahmins, although often so wealthy, loved to live in solitude, and to contemplate the glory of heaven, so much brighter than all the tinsel of this world. This feeling, so congenial to the

true greatness of man, was to be fully revived by Christianity, at the very moment that polytheism and the subsequent materialism had destroyed it almost entirely. The Christian religion was destined, in fact, to reproduce in the heart of man all the feelings excited primitively by the so-called natural religion, which was in reality the first revelation from heaven vouchsafed to him. A great deal more would be indeed superadded, as a much nearer and closer tie would bind him to heaven. Yet, whatever he had possessed at first, he would recover ; and among other blessings, this pre-eminently—to know that he was not created for this world alone, and that the best means of reaching heaven is not to be too closely wedded to earthly enjoyments ; but, on the contrary, the more he is separated, at least in spirit, from this mundane sphere, the more sure he is of happiness in the eternal and “permanent” city.

To be surprised, therefore, that the Egyptian monks understood this so well, is to be profoundly ignorant of the first elements of Christianity, which if it preaches anything, inculcates constantly this simple truth : that we ought not to place our treasure in this world, where the rust corrodes, the moth gnaws, and the thieves steal, but to secure it forever in heaven, where nothing of the kind can happen.

But if a more or less perfect separation from this world commends itself to Christians of all countries and all ages, it must have been chiefly natural and, as it were, spontaneous, for the Egyptian converts of the time under consideration. Men speak often of “sermons in stone ;” it may be said that the whole of Egypt was then a “sermon in action,” with respect to the doctrine of detachment from this earth. The glory of the “interminable” dynasties of the Pharaohs was gone forever. The monuments they thought they had raised to their imperishable fame were fast going to decay ; and scarcely any one knew at the time the names of the proud kings who had built them. The vast temples stood up silent and gloomy ; the moldy walls, neglected and damp, began to feel the corroding tooth of time ; the long rows of sphinxes did not witness any more the former gorgeous processions of priests and victims. This was certainly the case for Upper Egypt ; and Thebes itself was already a heap of ruins. Could a thoughtful man, at the sight of those immense solitudes, remain unconvinced of the vanity of earthly glory ? Could he feel any attachment for what passes away so swiftly, when everything had been done to secure its permanence ? Nothing had been

neglected in Egypt to render eternal what the genius of man had planned and his hands executed ; yet the end of it had already come ; and Antony, Paphnucius, and their brother hermits roamed at will in the deserted halls of the former Pharaohs.

And who can say that a better use could be made of that world in decay than by planting there cities of monks, when cities of politicians or soldiers were no more possible ? Had not the monks come and taken possession of Thebes, and of Scetè, and of Nitria, and of the Tebennite desert, down yonder on the confines of Nubia, the hyenas, the lions, the tigers, and the huge serpents of Africa would probably have been the only inhabitants of those solitudes. Would the philosophers of the “intuitive school” have preferred this alternative ?

To speak seriously, it must be insisted upon, that the “separation from the world,” so remarkable among the hermits of Egypt, was a real introduction of Christian doctrine and feeling among pretended civilized people, who had forgotten entirely the “hereafter,” so well known and felt in the primitive ages of mankind. But the austerities practiced by these same monks seem to be altogether unjustifiable to the keen-scented moralists of our age, and on this account deserve some further investigations.

b. These austerities embraced, in general, everything opposed to nature, but chiefly in point of food and sleep ; and expressed in these terms they constitute an objection, which to some appear unanswerable. Is not God the author of nature as well as of grace ? This is the paltry sophism on which the objection rests altogether ; and for a Christian who knows what grace is as well as nature, in our fallen state, the answer is altogether unnecessary. Yet we see every day that this simple remark is not sufficient, even for many who claim to be called real Christians.

The doctrine of the “mortification of the flesh” comes from Christ himself, and from his apostles, chiefly from St. Paul. Was not the life of the Saviour “mortified” ? Did he not say that his disciples must carry their cross after him ? Did not St. Paul repeat again and again that he preached nothing but “Christ, and him crucified” ? A great part of the New Testament could be quoted in support of this doctrine ; and it is a well-known fact that the Christian religion was fiercely opposed from the very beginning, on account of it. The cross conquered ; and from that moment new aspirations arose in mankind. Men and women abjured the plea-

sures of this world, and embraced a life abhorrent to nature, although God is “the author of nature as well as of grace.” To destroy nature is not a part of the Christian religion, since grace itself supposes it; but to subdue “nature” and make it obedient to the laws of “grace,” is and has always been the great object of the Christian’s warfare.

The Egyptian monks and anchorites did nothing else by their fasts and vigils; and in fact, instead of shortening their lives by their austerities, they prolonged them far beyond the average of mankind, and several of them lived considerably more than a century. Fasting seems to be adapted to the climate of Africa; and nothing there is so much opposed to length of days as a luxurious living.

But there are other considerations of a much higher import, which are calculated to place in a stronger light still the futility of the pretended objection we now consider. The world, at that time, needed a striking example of abstemiousness and self-renouncement, of chastity and purity of life, because it was perishing from an excess of luxury and good living. Who has not read the details of the patricians’ debaucheries in Rome, and their costly suppers prolonged through whole nights of gross intemperance and gluttony? Has ever the world seen another such period as this of bestial degradation and swinish orgies? To this excess of dishonor had finally come down the vaunted refinement of imperial Rome; and to save her, if possible, from destruction, a heroic example of abnegation was required. Egypt furnished it, and no Roman could read, without blushing, the simple details of the austere life led in the deserts by thousands. Fasting protracted every day until sunset; abstinence from every kind of food often endured weeks in succession; flight from carnal temptations by dwelling in an absolute solitude; subjection of the senses to the perfect control of the mind; these were in fact the noble examples contained in the biographies of Antony, of Pachomius, of Macarius, and hundreds of others. And we are not left here to conjecture as to the effect produced on Roman noblemen by reading the wonderful details of Egyptian austerities. Augustine attributed to these his own conversion, or at least the last step he took toward a new life. He had before his eyes the example of his friend Victorinus, as related in the eighth book of his *Confessions*; and when a voice from heaven finally called on him to open his new books and read—*tolle et lege*—what is it that struck his attention,

and settled down forever his determination? He himself told us, and the reader can judge of it by his words below, to which we refer.\*

The example of Antony and of so many other austere members of the Church, of which he says only a word in this passage, had been alluded to by him more in detail in the previous chapter; he saw "a multitude of young men, and young women; people of every age and sex, living in continency, yet bearing numerous spiritual children to the Lord; and a voice seemed to mock him by the question: Canst thou not do what this people are doing?"

In the time of Augustine the excesses of the Roman nobility were far less monstrous than in the two or three previous centuries. Many patrician families had been converted to the faith; and among the friends of Jerome, we become acquainted in his correspondence with the Christian posterity of the greatest consuls and dictators of the republic. Can we believe that in the conversion of so many patricians, dating from the third or fourth age of the Church, the facts which produced such a powerful effect on the mind and heart of Augustine, remained inoperative, and did not contribute to bring to Christ many persons of the first families in Rome? The monasticism of Egypt was soon transplanted to Italy, long before the time of Benedict, who is supposed to be the father of the monks of the West. Ambrose of Milan had fostered, in the neighborhood of his episcopal city, the establishment of one of those ascetic bee-hives. It is again St. Augustine who says, in the same eighth book of his *Confessions*:† "There was a monastery at Milan, full of good brethren, and Ambrose was their foster-father." Can we not, without presumption, attribute, in great part at least, the change produced in many Roman senators to the very austeries practiced in those holy places of seclusion? A great deal is made of the moral reform introduced in the empire by the Antonines; and we do not pretend that

\* "Audieram de Antonio quod ex evangelica lectione . . . admonitus fuerit, tanquam sibi diceretur quod legebatur: 'Vade, vende omnia quae habes, et da pauperibus; . . . et veni, sequere me.' . . . Itaque concitus redii ad locum ubi sedebat Alypius; ibi enim posueram codicem Apostoli cum inde surrexeram. Arripui, arripui, et legi in silentio capitulum, quo primum conjecti sunt oculi mei: 'non in comedationibus et ebrietatibus, non in cubilibus et impudicitiis, . . . sed induite Dominum Jesum Christum, et carnis providentiam ne feceritis in concupiscentiis.' Nec ultra volui legere, nec opus erat."—Lib. viii., cap. 12.

† Cap. vi.

their mild sway, accompanied with the practice of some domestic virtues, did not contribute to a sensible diminution of the degrading excesses of the previous century. But it is to be remarked that this amelioration is ascribed in the main to the Stoic philosophy, which all the Antonines fostered more or less ; yet the Stoic philosophy did not prevent Trajan from being a monster of lust, Marcus Aurelius from being a fierce persecutor of the virtuous Christians, and, before them, Seneca from hankering all his life after wealth, and, worst of all, Tacitus from abusing falsely and unjustly Christians and Jews.

We are justified, in our opinion, in ascribing the moral change which then took place, rather to the gradual spread of Christian truth and virtue, particularly to the striking example of so many thousand Egyptian anchorites and cenobites, who formed at the time a considerable part of the whole population along the Nile and in the Delta, than to the Stoic philosophy then prevalent. The reader is referred back to a short description of the city of Oxyrynchus, preserved in a delightful page of Baronius, translated in the fourth chapter of this volume, where the moral state of Egypt is portrayed.

To show still better the great influence the Egyptian monastic austerities must have had on the conversion of the Roman world, a word in conclusion will not be profitless and uninteresting. The bugbear of the mortification of the flesh, in our age, is a sufficient reason for many to turn their back on the Christian religion which preaches it ; it was not so even in the midst of the excesses of imperial Rome. An austere life was then justly considered as a great and holy thing, too repugnant to nature perhaps to be practiced by many, yet noble enough to be admired by all. Protestantism, unfortunately, by making this great subject one of its issues with the Catholic Church, has lowered considerably the standard of moral virtue for all those who, after the first struggle with authority, found themselves embraced in its baneful folds. All the *great reformers* of the sixteenth century were as ardent to oppose *monkish austerities* as to advocate *justification by faith alone*. One in fact depends greatly on the other. Justification by faith has gone to the tomb of the Capulets ; but opposition to bodily mortification remains as fierce as ever. The reader remembers the passage quoted from Mr. Lecky, which for every sincere Catholic is a mere caricature, but by the great number is admitted as the sober truth. People forget, in our age, the intimate connection between mind and

body in man ; and they generally imagine that the senses can always be easily controlled by the will. Not only, in their opinion, the grace of God is not required to subdue the flesh, but the three great enemies of the salvation of man—the flesh, the world, and the devil—to which the Christian religion declares an eternal warfare, are regarded as mere bugbears having no existence but in the imagination. Consequently, all the strange facts related in particular in the biography of St. Antony, are supposed to have been mere illusions of the fancy. Thus, the existence of the whole spiritual world is denied at once, and man is thought to be a unit in creation, harmonious in all his faculties, and unattackable from outside, because disconnected from the whole spiritual universe. This great delusion has come directly from the denial by Protestantism of the necessity of good works, particularly of those which are called “works of supererogation.” The whole doctrine was too fatal in its consequences to remain a tenet of absolutely all Protestant sects. Consequently, a number of them, in this age, admit what they call the necessity of good works ; but by this they merely understand deeds of benevolence and charity. As to the importance of subduing the flesh by deeds of mortification, they remain firm in their opposition to it, and thus they continue to deny, practically at least, the twofold nature of man, and the interior struggle which nevertheless goes on constantly, between the will and the passions.

This was not the case, to the same extent, among the Roman and Greek pagans. They hated austerity, because they were, above all, sensual and carnal people, but they felt inwardly that those men and women who had the courage to embrace an ascetic life, rose, in fact, superior to corrupt human nature, and followed, after all, the promptings of virtue, which in Stoicism retained a great name at least. They read, therefore, with avidity all those accounts of Oriental monasticism ; they admired the men who had embraced such a life ; and by this admiration they showed a better appreciation of true virtue, nay, of the real nature of man, than all those pretended Christians of our day who revile what is too elevated for them, and in fact blaspheme what they know not. In teaching, therefore, austerity of life, Christianity in Egypt was restoring to mankind a true knowledge of human nature, and creating a new world based on truth as being thoroughly opposed to the excesses of the period.

c. But the same great object was again obtained more thoroughly

still by impressing mankind with the necessity and dignity of labor; and this alone amounted to a complete moral revolution in the social world. We know the taunt with which, as invariably as aptly, monasticism is attacked by all those who have never entered within the precincts of a monastery. The inmates are called *lazy monks*, and their life is thought to be a useless life, because not engaged in the pursuit of wealth. One thing, however, is certain, namely, that the Egyptian ascetics were not *lazy*, and all the time not given by them to prayer was strictly employed in honest labor. But before we come to some detail on this particular subject with reference to Egypt, a word must be said in general on the ingratitudo of men who, in fact, owe to the monks the modern appreciation of free labor, and the whole development of modern industry, yet revile them as *lazy* and useless.

In antiquity, with the exception of the Hebrews, who had received from God the true theory of the necessity of labor and its dignity, with that single exception—after the patriarchal period—manual labor was nearly confined to slaves, and free industry was almost altogether unknown. The monks, both in the East and in the West, were the first to teach it to mankind by their example. This simple assertion requires some development. In the patriarchal period, in Hindostan, Central Asia, China, and the far Orient, as well as in the West, including not only Western Asia, but even Pelasgic Europe, slavery, in the later Roman, Greek, and Egyptian sense, was unknown. The bond-servants of the patriarchs were certainly servants for life, but not subjected to the degradation of Greek and Roman slaves. Mr. Henry Sumner Maine proves in his *Ancient Law* that at that early age the “servant” in reality was no more a slave than “the son of the house.” As long as the boy remained with his father, he was as strictly a servant as any “domestic” in the family. The only difference was that he had the prospect of becoming master in his turn, and of being, in the course of time, at the head of a house. In every other particular the bondsman could expect to be treated as well as the son under the common paternal roof. This positive statement, perfectly well ascertained at this time, proves that real slavery did not then exist. And as the author of *Ancient Law* proves likewise that this state of things obtained everywhere at that epoch, or, at least, that no place can be pointed out where this did not exist, it follows that the abominable system of slavery, as taught by Aristotle and all the legists after him, does

not go much farther up in point of time than the origin of the Grecian republics.

But when the patriarchal period terminated, slavery soon became what the details we possess of social life in Greece and Rome declare emphatically. Our purpose does not oblige us to stain the imagination of our readers by the reproduction of these details, but the universal state of labor and industry, as it became later on in consequence of slavery, must be insisted upon, in a few words at least, to enable the reader to judge of the inestimable revolution produced in the social world by the establishment of monasteries. Labor had become disgraceful, as it was mostly confined to slaves ; and we retain still, in our Christian vocabulary, a phrase eloquent enough, if we paid attention to its original meaning, which, fortunately, is now totally forgotten. The third commandment of the Decalogue tells us that it is forbidden to engage in *servile* work on Sundays ; and moral theologians explain what must be understood by *servile work*, namely, everything undignified, menial, in which the mental operations bear only a secondary part ; everything, in fine, which was formerly expected from slaves alone, as no freeman could, without disgrace, engage in them even for amusement.

Hence the mason, the carpenter, the blacksmith, the fuller, the cook, men of all other trades, were slaves ; in course of time even the agriculturist and gardener ; nay, the physician, the artist, sculptor, painter, musician—all these were slaves ; and scarcely any one but a slave could embrace those professions. An exception has been made for the Jews ; as, among them, labor was never disgraceful ; and it is probably on this account that St. Paul could be a tent-maker and a Roman citizen.

The artisans generally were employed in the houses of their masters ; and no patrician in Rome ever needed the services of strangers, but found in the *ergastulum* where his slaves were kept at night, men skilled in every department of labor. One of them among others, whose name escapes us at this moment, was the *owner* of five hundred masons, who repaired his palaces in the city, or constructed his villas out of Rome. Occasionally, however, some trusty servants were allowed to practice their trade abroad, handing over the profit to their masters ; and we may say that all the barbers, retail vendors, cooks in open air, artisans of various kinds, having their shops in the most industrious parts of cities and towns, were men kept in bondage, and called to a strict account for every penny they received.

But the worst feature of the system was that agriculturists in the country, gardeners, farm-laborers, etc., became, after the Roman civil wars and the proscriptions which followed, bondsmen too, and were worse treated than the slaves kept in cities. They had to till the soil of all Italy for the profit of the most corrupt Roman aristocracy, under the eye of the harshest overseers. Thus there did not remain the last vestige of a third class of citizens, between the rich and the poor, between the wealthy freeman, enjoying all the privileges that birth or money can give, and the wretched slave, deprived even of a name and a personality.

This social monstrosity, with respect to labor, has been stated to have had its origin, everywhere; directly after the patriarchal period. Some modifications, however, are required, to that sweeping assertion. Agriculture, certainly, did not pass at once exclusively into the hands of slaves ; it was only at the end of the proscriptions of Sulla, Marius, and Octavius, that the whole soil of Italy was cultivated by men reduced to the most severe and harsh kind of slavery. There had been until that time in the Roman republic a real yeomanry, which had furnished the soldiers who conquered the world for Rome. It was only under the empire that armies began to be composed first of poor citizens living in Rome or in her Italian colonies ; later on of allies or even slaves ; and finally of barbarians, after the northern invasions began. It was, therefore, only under the empire that the “third estate” had entirely disappeared from the rural districts. In the cities, the free industrial class had ceased to exist long before ; and it is chiefly of this class that it can be said to have begun to decay at the end of the patriarchal period, when strict slavery was first introduced.

This great social revolution had certainly originated before the time of Numa—at whatever epoch this must have been. This great legislator—if to him is to be attributed everything laid to his account by Livy or Diodorus—saw that already in his time industry and trade were threatened by slave labor ; and on this account surely, although the early historians do not positively state it, he established the guilds and corporations, of which Plutarch speaks in his *Life of Numa*. The motive we prefer to assign to it, is certainly more natural than the one suggested by the philosopher of Chæronea in the following passage :

“ The most admired of all his institutions is his distribution of the citizens into companies, according to their arts and trades.

For the city, consisting, as we have observed, of two nations, or rather factions, who were by no means willing to unite, or to blot out the remembrance of their original difference, but maintained perpetual contests and party quarrels, he took the same method with them as is used to incorporate hard and solid bodies, which, while entire, will not mix at all, but when reduced to powder unite with ease. To attain this purpose, he divided, as I said, the whole multitude into small bodies, who, gaining new distinctions, lost by degrees the great original one, in consequence of being thus broken into so many parts. This distribution was made according to the several arts or trades, of musicians, goldsmiths, masons, dyers, shoemakers, tanners, braziers, and potters. He collected the other artificers also into companies, who had their respective halls, courts, and religious ceremonies, peculiar to each society. By these means he first took away the distinction of Sabines and Romans, subjects of Tatius and subjects of Romulus, both name and thing ; the very separation into parts mixing and incorporating the whole together."

This is certainly a curious paragraph of Plutarch ; but we cannot but think that if the chief object of Numa had been what he supposes, instead of bringing about the unity of the people by such a clumsy means as this, he would have thus introduced the original division of the citizens as Romans and Sabines into all his guilds and corporations of artisans. We hardly believe, moreover, that at so early an epoch as this there were among the rude mountaineers of the Sabine country, and in the rough population of robbers and vagabonds who composed the first inhabitants of the Palatine, so many artificers of various kinds to be thus formed in exact and regular companies. We cannot but agree here with Niebuhr, who sees in Numa's reign only a period of peace and mutual settlement after the first contest between the Romans and Sabines. The great German writer does not say, in his *Lectures*, a single word on this formation of guilds and corporations. Yet it is undoubtedly an historical fact, whose consequences endured more or less for centuries. It is certain that after regulating for a long time in Rome the *status* of free labor, they by degrees fell into disuse : and in our opinion, this gradual disappearance was mainly due to the progressive growth of slavery, which certainly must have interfered from the start with the operations of free labor in guilds. At the time of Cicero there did not remain the last shred of them, as we know from the attempt of Clodius to revive them. This most corrupt and

ambitious demagogue, who tried to raise himself to power by pandering to the needs and vices of the plebeians, did not fail to see that one of the greatest and fairest subjects of complaint on the part of the lower orders was the absolute denial of the right of industry, which was totally closed against them by the universality of slave labor. Tiberius Gracchus would have certainly raised a much more just cry of reform by showing the impossibility for any poor citizen to support himself honestly by his labor, on account of the multitude of slaves, than by his agrarian law, however just this might have been ; and the moral wounds of the social state in Rome would have been undoubtedly much more easily healed by restoring to each his right of earning his bread, than by giving gratuitously land which the grantee did not know how to till, even had he been willing to do so. But the Gracchi did not see the possibility of modifying even slavery.

The object of Clodius in proposing his law was certainly selfish, and he did not intend to benefit the people, but only to injure his personal enemies, namely, the senators, the partisans of Cicero. Yet he had struck on the right key ; and thus the plebeians applauded him. The social evil of slave labor had, however, proceeded so far, that it was well-nigh impossible to organize among the plebs any corporations of artisans, as it may be said that there remained among them scarcely any "artisans" at all. Hence, Frenshemius in his *Supplementum* to Livy, collecting his authorities from all contemporary writers, as Livy himself fails us here, is obliged to write : "These measures were extremely popular. . . . Not only the corporations abolished by the senate were revived, but many others which had never existed, were set on foot for the benefit of the lowest class." We learn from this, that many of those "corporations" had been anteriorly abolished by the senate, probably on account of their uselessness ; and likewise, that the new ones, which were set on foot by the law of Clodius, could not be organized except for the benefit of the dregs of the lower orders, among whom scarcely any trace of industry or arts remained.

This attempt was therefore futile ; and Clodius having been assassinated, a short time later, by Milo, all his "labor for the people" came to naught ; and all Roman industry remained in the hands of slaves, and the social state of the republic continued just as it has been described.

This condition of affairs obtained in Egypt, as well as in Italy,

Greece, and a part at least of Asia ; and the monks along the Nile, and in the deserts of Libya, were the first to teach, by their example, the dignity of labor, and to originate the Third Estate, without which we could not conceive, in our Christian ideas, the possibility of human society. No one will deride this assertion who can calculate the effect produced in the markets of Alexandria and Memphis by the sudden introduction of the immense amount of simple wares, the produce of the daily labor of so many thousand active members of those silent and industrious communities : mats of every shape and form ; baskets of every size ; boxes and chests for every possible use and adaptation ; fruits and vegetables too, chiefly the dates, so abundant in the desert, so easily dried up and packed, and so universally relished all over Greece, Italy, and Spain. Let the reader remember that each of the monasteries of Scetè, of Nitria, of Tabennæ, contained usually from three to five thousand inmates, constantly occupied in labor, when they were not engaged in praising and worshiping God.

Their intention in selling their wares was not to get rich, to build palaces for their dwellings, and to plant delicious gardens for their walks ; but simply to procure what the sands of Africa could not produce, and what was absolutely needed in those large agglomerations of Christian people, for their dress, the various details of their worship, their medicines when sick, etc. This was the first example of human industry carried on on a large scale, and without the need of slave labor. Are people sane in mind who still call the monks indolent, and abuse in particular those of Egypt as the scum of the earth, and the most useless and contemptible class of men in existence ? \*

A word has already been said of the early transplantation of monastic life in Italy ; and the authority of St. Augustine was quoted for

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\* It is generally supposed by modern writers on "the Lives of the Fathers of the Wilderness," that the industry of these monks was confined to the most necessary pieces of furniture needed for their own cells. But this is undoubtedly an oversight, which the mere reading of the original sources for this branch of literature would immediately correct. Nothing is more certain than the selling of those wares in large quantities to the outside world. The monks of Tabennæ, in particular, kept on the Nile a large number of boats to carry the produce of their labor to Thebes, Tentyra, and other great cities down the stream. The only thing forbidden the monks who were intrusted with the execution of these commercial transactions, was to follow the natural greed attached too often to

the actual existence of a convent established near Milan, under the patronage of St. Ambrose. It is likewise well known that the isle of Lerins, not far from Marseilles, received very early a colony from Egypt ; and Cassian, whose works are yet extant, ended his days on the southern coast of France, after having begun his religious life in Palestine, and perfected it on the banks of the Nile. Thus was the true Christian idea of labor and industry introduced in the West from Christian Africa, and thus the monstrous system of slavery was sapped at its base, when it was yet flourishing all over the Roman Empire. About the same time, although somewhat later, St. Augustine in Africa, and St. Martin of Tours in France, labored to the same effect ; and thus the example of Egypt spread to the limits of the Western continent ; whilst St. Hilarion carried the cenobitic life from Africa to Palestine ; St. Basil to Cappadocia and Pontus ; the school of Edessa, St. Ephrem in particular, to Persia, Armenia, and the East ; so that, according to Cosmas Indicopleustes, the rules of monastic life were followed in his time—the beginning of the sixth century—as far as the Ganges and the island of Ceylon. All this happened before the barbarians invaded Europe, and the Benedictine order arose to repair the disasters of that gloomy period.

It is undeniable that in all these early establishments, modeled on those of Egypt, besides prayer, study, and mortification, manual labor was an essential part of the order of the day ; and nobody can refuse to admit the immense influence this universal moral institution must have had to change the ideas of men with respect to toil, and cause ultimately to rise everywhere a class of citizens unknown previously, and which became in course of time the Third Estate, given over to industry, production, agriculture, and commerce. A silent revolution began thus to take place, and entirely change the ideas of men on a most important subject. It is, indeed, in Egypt,

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trade, and engage in what in our days would be called *speculation*. There is, in particular, a curious episode related in the life of St. Pachomius, who punished severely one of his subordinates for having given way to the worldly spirit of a trader. But the fact that the selling of the objects of the industry of the monks in the markets of the Thebais from the monasteries around Syene, and in those of Alexandria from the convents of Scetè and Nitria, must have produced a real revolution in those two great centers of commerce, must be admitted by all who have taken the care of reading the details spread here and there in the *Vita Patrum*, and chiefly in the documents published by the Bollandists.

that the Christian idea of labor originated on a large plan. It is true that wherever the religion of the Saviour was preached, the monstrous notions which polytheism had introduced to curse mankind were gradually, but from the start, undermined, or at least weakened. A convert to the doctrine of the Cross, in any part of the world, naturally imbibed the ideas of *humility*, of self-abnegation, of the useful employment of time, of brotherly charity for all, chiefly for the poor and the outcast ; and thus certainly the downfall of such a monstrosity as the system of slavery then existing, was prepared and gradually brought on. Yet such establishments as those of cenobites, particularly when they prayed and worked in common to the number of so many thousand, could not but be powerfully instrumental in bringing about this happy result.

*d.* This brings us to the consideration of the solitary and cenobitic or conventional life in its essentials—another proof of the most important truth, that the monastic institutions in Egypt brought back mankind to the original and simple ideas of life during the patriarchal period, as far as it was possible to do it ; and redressed, in great part at least, the false notions of human life introduced by polytheism among ancient nations.

Nothing conduces so much to the good of society as a correct estimate of what the Greeks called the *summum bonum*, considered in relation to this world. All the sects of philosophers, at the time, treated the question only in reference to this world, as they left aside entirely the consideration of a hereafter ; and in doing so they differed widely in opinion, on the subject of felicity on earth ; and the various sects among them could never agree on it. By this perpetual wrangling they inflicted a most fatal wound on society, which, until their time, had lived uniformly on the previous simple notions derived from antiquity, but which became henceforth the prey of many antagonistic systems. The ideas men had of life in the early ages, were most simple, but precise. An abundant, and plain diet ; a most modest and comfortable covering for the body ; a neat but small dwelling, generally erected near a stream of pure water ; the coolness of the breeze and frequent baths during the heat of summer, the direct rays of the sun and protection against the north wind, in their short, but often keen winter ; these were all, or nearly all, the comforts and luxuries they needed for the generally long period of their existence. In these they found their *summum bonum*, as far as this life is concerned ; and consequently they thanked God for

them when these were granted, as was the case with Abraham, Jacob, and others ; and they humbly submitted to the will of God when these things were taken away, as it happened to Job in Arabia.

But philosophy introduced new wants, and polytheism in course of time made of this life a very different affair. For it is chiefly to polytheism that we can trace the opening period of luxury and vice among men. In Hindostan, Egypt, and Greece, particularly, this was emphatically true. What is called the height of civilization among those nations coincided with the greatest development of polytheism, and this civilization was, in fact, the greatest incentive to corruption and vice.—We refer the reader to many passages in *Gentilism*.—The simplicity of patriarchal manners disappeared entirely ; and artificial, unnatural, and finally dissolute practices and customs replaced the golden guilelessness of a primitive age. Read in the books written by modern authors on the manners of the Hellenes at the time of Pericles, and on those of the Romans under the first Cæsars, the shocking details which formed the usual day of those *most refined* people, and you will be able to judge of the degeneracy of morals introduced by a false religion and an atheistic philosophy. The stream of human life had completely deviated from the straight course it followed at its origin, and it was finally running wild among breakers and pitfalls, toward an unknown and bottomless precipice.

Let the advocates of ever-progressing civilization be fair, and tell us candidly what is finally the inevitable goal toward which the *continuous* advance of mankind is tending. There can be no doubt, in the estimation of all reasonable men, that luxury always drifts toward excess ; that civilization, mainly built on it, brings on, invariably, corruption, and that this kind of progress, in the supposition of its continuance, must finally reach down to the depth of degradation. What then becomes of human life ? a cess-pool of unimaginable decay, in which all the previous hopes of mankind are buried, and into which the eye of supernal spirits, including both angels and men, cannot look without horror. This was, without the least exaggeration, the moral state of Rome at the end of the republic and the beginning of the empire.

That human history might continue, and not end in the mere horrible chronicle of degraded apes or gorillas, a complete return to the primitive simplicity of the golden age was absolutely required ; for the evil having gone beyond remedy, a simple turning back of

the human stream to a well-poised equilibrium of its waters, was as impracticable as it is on the brink of Niagara Falls ; the whole flood tide of corruption must be swept away. And it was probably for this reason that the restoration of the primitive system of human life by the monasteries of Egypt brought on only a temporary suspension of the evil ; so that a complete destruction of the Roman world by the barbarians became necessary, as a preliminary step to the subsequent restoration of the world by the formation of Christendom.

There is no doubt, however, that if the moral wounds of the world were to be healed, it could be only by the remedy adopted by the ascetics and cenobites of Egypt. Human life had to be restored to its primitive simplicity ; and the daily manner of living of Paul, Antony, Macarius, Pachomius, and others, was the only practicable return to a new, safe order of things, as far as this moral restoration was still possible.

Here, it is true, Mr. Lecky will step in, and maintain that the Egyptian *monkish* life differed a great deal from that of the primitive patriarchs ; and the picture he has thought proper to draw of the first, little, indeed, resembles that of the second. Some remarks are therefore required to establish the identity of both, in *essentials* at least : if we except the austerities practiced by the monks, and apparently unknown to the patriarchs, the coincidence is almost perfect ; for life among the ascetics of Egypt seems to have been copied on that of the old Brahmins, such as it is depicted in the code of Menu, although certainly Pachomius and Antony had never heard of it. There were, among the Hindoos, men who devoted themselves to a solitary life, exactly as it was understood by the Egyptian\*anchorites. It seems from the Menu code, that all Brahmins, after many years of usefulness among their countrymen, retired finally to the solitude of the forest, and there spent the remainder of their days in prayer and meditation, just as it happened, later on, in the deserts of Scete and Nitria. The *cenobitic* life in the Orient, it is true, seems to have originated only in Buddhism, which is comparatively recent ; its founder—Gautama—belonging to the sixth century before Christ ; \* but the *solitary* or anchorite's life was certainly as austere among the Hindoo rishis of the primitive ages as among the Egyptian converts of the third and fourth centuries. Yet it would be absurd to

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\* This, however, will be discussed directly ; and we may point out the real origin of the Buddhist monasteries, at least as far as can be done.

attribute the prevalence of the second on the banks of the Nile to the former example of the Brahmins along the Upper Ganges. Paul and Antony had undoubtedly never heard of the gymnosophists of India, yet both were so perfectly alike, that to read the description of the first brings the modern mind back directly to the remembrance of the second ; so that this last was—as we call it—the reproduction of that old patriarchal life, after many centuries of interruption, because the world needed it. The restoration of the moral order among men could not be effected without bringing back, in a conspicuous manner, the primitive simplicity. It is, therefore, proper, and it may be interesting, to describe the primitive brahminical life in Hindostan, in order to see how it corresponded with the practices of hermits in Egypt in subsequent times, although there was no connection whatever between them.

##### 5. *Primitive ascetic life in Hindostan, and origin of Buddhist monasticism.*

This is the description of the *Vanaprasta*, and of the *Sanyassi* in India, as given by Fra Paolino, who related what he witnessed, and did not draw on his imagination for the following passage, which merely reproduces facts daily seen in India, even in these modern corrupt times :

“Whoever, among the Brahmins, wishes to become a *Vanaprasta*, must have attained a mature age—that is, from forty to fifty. He sets off from the city, and carries with him only a copper drinking-cup and his staff ; his only garment consists of a piece of calico around his loins ; and he looks for a lonely spot in the forest or the desert. He can bring with him his wife, but he must henceforth live apart from her, and she cannot be any more for him a spouse. Many of these anchorites live on the mountains or in the woods, in the neighborhood of each other. Their food consists of roots, of fruits, and spontaneously-growing vegetables ; water is their only drink. They sleep on the ground, and even during the rainy season their only shelter is the thatched roof under which they dwell. They do not indulge in the luxury of the bath, as all the other Brahmins do, and thus they are far from being clean and tidy ; they, however, bear on their forehead, their chest, and their arms the sign of the sect they have adopted—either that of Vishnu or of Siva. Their rule imposes strictly on them the obligation of always telling the simple truth, of never destroying life, even with respect to the smallest insects, of

never appropriating to themselves the property of others, however they may be urged to do so by the most extreme necessity, of practicing invariably the strictest continency, of keeping a constant watch on their interior purity, in order to acquire interior peace, of spending a long time in the contemplation of God, in the duty of prayer, and the practice of austerities.

“Men of the three other castes can also enter the order of *Vana-prasta*; but they must not build their cells near those of the Brahmins, who alone, after having lived twenty-two years in that austere state, can aspire, if they survive, to a still higher perfection. They may, it is true, return then to the world, and enjoy the public respect duly awarded to their virtues; but many of them refuse to do so, and become henceforth *Sanyassis*. It is with particular solemnities that a Brahmin is consecrated to that order. The top of his head is shaved, in token of absolute self-renouncement; with appropriate prayers he is invested with a yellow robe which he must wash himself and keep clean; the *gourou* places in one of his hands the *hamadalam* or consecrated cup, and in the other a staff, called *damdam*. With these the *Sanyassis* beg from door to door, without saying a word; everybody prostrates himself before them. Some of them live in temples or pagodas, and receive for their support from the other Brahmins, rice, fruits, or vegetables. The habitual subject of their meditations must never be concerned with this world: but exclusively directed toward the only supreme God, to whom they have devoted themselves for life. At least this the Brahmins positively maintain. Their rule obliges them to subdue entirely six enemies, namely, sensuality, anger, cupidity, pride, revenge, and all selfish desires. At their death no one weeps over them, since they are believed to have taken the direct road to heaven, without the torture of transmigration.”

If many of these severe prescriptions are yet followed in our time, what must have been the case when, in the primitive ages, the religious belief in Hindostan was much purer than it is at present, and the morality was so superior to that of our day? It is almost evident, and can scarcely be controverted, that this former austere life of the Orient met with a nearly exact reproduction in the lauras and cells built along the Nile in primitive Christianity; and that Egypt then witnessed a remarkable return to the simple life of Hindoo rishis and *sanyassis*. But these seem to have been only anchorites; was there likewise in Hindostan something at least resembling the numerous

monasteries, where a common life was practiced in Egypt by thousands of inmates at the same time?

We scarcely meet with anything like it, if we study India only on the surface. Yet the resemblance between both countries and both epochs can to a great degree be reproduced.

First, we have just heard from Father Paolino that in his time "many of those Hindoo anchorites lived on the mountains and in the woods in the neighborhood of each other." Did it not some time come to a positive co-habitation and common life, and consequently offer the near image of what we call a convent? It is sure that the ordinary Brahmins could never be subjected to strict cenobitic rules, since they were enjoined to marry and live with their wives until their period of complete retirement from the world. But when they began to practice the austerities of *Vanaprastas* and of *Sanyassis*, nothing could prevent them from doing so. It is true, undoubtedly, that in latter ages, principally in the last century, when Father Paolino witnessed their astonishing mortifications, they were mere anchorites, and do not appear to have led a common life. This was also certainly the case at the end of the sixteenth century, when Father de Nobili became a Sanyassi himself, to overcome the prejudices of the Brahmins against the Christian religion, and dispose them to embrace it. But who can be sure that it had always been so, and that when the number of those Hindoo penitents was much larger, and the observance of their rule much more strict, they never joined together to form large communities, particularly since we know that they often built their cells "in the neighborhood of each other"? It was thus in fact that the cenobitic life began in Egypt, where at first all Christian ascetics were anchorites.

This, it is true, seems to be mere conjecture; yet it receives a strong confirmation from the early establishment of Lamaism among the Buddhists. How did such an idea originate among the Eastern sectors of Gautama, in Thibet, China, Japan, and the whole Transgangetic peninsula? In those vast and populous countries, we see a strict monasticism prevailing from the very start, from the ages certainly anterior to Christianity, in several places, at least. For it must be borne in mind, that if Lamaistic Buddhism was introduced in China, Siam, Ava, and perhaps Japan and Corea, at a period posterior to our era—a very doubtful hypothesis—this was not the case, certainly, for all countries where it prevails. The kings of Thibet, to whom is attributed the institution of Lamaism

in that country, are supposed, by modern Orientalists, to have lived from the sixth to the ninth century ; but it is positively stated that they received it from Nepaul, the most renowned seat of Buddhism in Northern India, where, consequently, a kind of pagan "monachism" existed, previous to that epoch. The great development of Lamaism is certainly subsequent, and the first Dalai-Lama of Thibet dates only from the end of the fourteenth century ; but it is admitted at the present time, that, as was just asserted, Nepaul, in the sixth century of our era, sent to Thibet the first Buddhist "monks," who founded Lamaism in that country. The question is, therefore, How long prior to that epoch had Lamaism existed in Nepaul ? It is difficult to give a positive answer to this question. It is, however, certain that Lamaism is yet very prevalent in Western Nepaul, where it exists, together with Brahminism and Mahometanism ; and the consideration of the actual state of the country may enlighten us about former times.

All along the Upper Sutledge, the largest tributary of the Indus River, there are at this moment great monasteries of both the yellow and the red caps, living in peace with each other. At Sungnam, in particular, there is a large Buddhist library, a printing establishment, and a gigantic statue of Buddha. The more travelers ascend both the Sutledge and the Indus, the more they find themselves in a Buddhist and Lamaist country. Ladack, at the very source of the Indus—a most ancient city, formerly much more important than it is to-day—is yet full of lamas, both male and female, and the general opinion in the whole country is, that Ladack became Buddhist before our era. In this case Lamaism flourished in Nepaul as early at least as the beginning of Christianity, and the opinion of those who pretend that the strange monastic institutions of Lamaism were copied from the Nestorian convents, which were founded in India only during the sixth century—this opinion cannot be sustained with regard to Ladack, and to Cashmere, which is contiguous.

As the question of the origin of Lamaism in the far Orient is of great importance, it is proper to discuss it here briefly, and to come at least to some decision in a matter certainly most obscure. The most common opinion derives it from Nestorianism, which, they pretend, spread as far as the western limits of China before the sixth age, and had undoubtedly taken possession of the Celestial Empire before the eighth century. Yet we believe that Nepaul and Ladack did not

receive monasticism from the Nestorians. Previous to the sixth century Nepaul possessed Lamaistic convents, so as to be able to transmit the institution to Thibet ; and as early as the first century of our era, if not before, Ladack, on the confines of Cashmere, had monasteries which are firmly believed in the country itself to be the parents of those yet existing on the banks of the Sutledge and the Indus. But this second fact being merely probable, we will rely only on the first, which is perfectly historical. Nestorianism cannot have been the occasion of the spread of Lamaism in Nepaul and Thibet, because it did not and could not reach that part of Asia at so early a period as the sixth century. We intend, later on, to discuss the question of the real spread of Nestorianism in the East, and prove that Christianity had reached the peninsula of India much earlier than the time of Nestorius ; but there is no proof whatever that Christianity itself had already been established on the high plateau of the Himalaya. As to Nestorianism, the direction it took can now be well ascertained, and in the sixth century it had not certainly reached Nepaul or Ladack.

Nestorianism was carried to the East by the merchants of Alexandria and of Seleucia, and by no other way of conveyance that is known. Cosmas Indicopleustes has described the process and the route in his most interesting volume, which Father Montfaucon published at the beginning of last century. It was commerce which was the occasion of carrying Nestorianism as far as the island of Ceylon. The ships of the Alexandrian merchants either entered the Red Sea through the canal of the Ptolemies, or sent their goods across Egypt through the usual caravan route. The ships went round the Arabian peninsula, and thus reached the coast of Malabar, or making a long sweep around Cape Comorin, they went directly to the coast of Coromandel or to Ceylon. Cosmas gives the list of the commodities in which the Alexandrian merchants traded, in which he had traded himself, and the places where these could be procured. It is clear from his book that Nepaul or Ladack were completely out of the way. The trade in silk in his time did not carry Western merchants to China across Tartary. He states positively that silk was brought by the Asiatics to Lower Mesopotamia or to the head of the Persian Gulf, where the Greek vessels went to receive it. More details will be given when it will be time to speak of the evangelization of India ; but these few particularities bear us out in denying that Nestorian missionaries could have reached Nepaul and Ladack as

early as the sixth century, much less earlier, as the supposed Nepaulese propagandism of Lamaism to Thibet certainly requires. The trade of Seleucia in Mesopotamia was also direct from the Persian Gulf to Hindostan, never to the northwest of the peninsula.

If the further question be mooted, How then did Lamaism originate? we can only answer either that we do not know, or that it came from Brahminism. And this last supposition is not altogether to be set aside as unworthy of consideration. At first, it is true, it looks as altogether delusory, and few, we admit, would consent even to discuss it; and the chief reason is that wherever Lamaism exists the caste-system is altogether absent, as rigidly as in other Buddhist countries. We do not find any more castes in Thibet, China, Japan, etc., than in the few spots in Hindostan where Buddhists still exist. But does this universal fact argue such a complete antagonism between Buddhists and Brahmins, that they cannot positively co-exist together, and that the first can never be supposed to have received any institution from the second? This is certainly the view taken by Heeren and by many other authors of great repute. They consider both the absence of castes and the existence of Lamaistic institutions as supposing a total antagonism with Brahminism, nay, as connected together and always existing together; and the consequence is that it is not possible for the Buddhists of Nepaul, for instance, to have received the institution of Lamaism from the Brahmins. This, we think, is not a necessary conclusion from the facts. The absence of castes among the worshipers of Buddha is certainly a point of antagonism between them and the Brahmins, whose very existence rests on the caste-system; but the Lamaist monastic institutions among the former are not and cannot be supposed in any way to be opposed to anything in Brahminism, and may even have come from it.

Lamaism, reposing altogether on the idea of Avatar—as everything in the system rests on the successive incarnations of the Buddhas—cannot but have a secret connection with Brahminism, particularly with that branch of it which is devoted to the worship of Siva. It is now admitted that the Buddhism of Thibet is strongly impregnated with the detestable aroma of Sivaism; and the idea of “incarnation” in both—we beg pardon for using the term, but it speaks more vividly to the imagination than that of avatar—the idea of incarnation in both Thibetism and Hindooism, must bear an unaccountable sameness for both the deluded idolaters of the

land of Bod—Thibet—and the land of Mahadeva or Siva—namely, India.

We, therefore, scarcely share in the prevalent opinion of the internecine opposition of Buddhism and Brahminism ; and we cannot but remark that the supposition of the disappearance of the former from Hindostan toward the beginning of our era having been the result of a long war between both parties, is altogether an historical hypothesis without the least foundation on the most slender basis of facts. How Buddhism was reduced, in the large Cisgangetic peninsula, to the small number of adherents it has counted ever since, is altogether unexplained by history, and cannot be made the basis of serious considerations one way or another. All we know is that, at this very time, and for a long period previously, Buddhists and Brahmins exist without quarreling in the Presidency of Bombay ; and travelers tell us that in Nepaul, and farther west, in Ladack, both sects live at peace together and flourish on the banks of the Sutledge and the Indus.

It is known, moreover, that not only on the Upper Indus, but likewise on the Upper Ganges, the Brahmin caste has preserved more of its characteristics than in any other part of Hindostan ; yet these are the very spots of India nearer to Buddhism, and in fact closely allied to Lamaism ; and this very important consideration requires some historical and geographical details, as the obvious consequence must be adverse to the supposed antagonism of both sects, carried on necessarily as far as the total destruction of the one or the other. It is sure, on the contrary, that both sects can co-exist amicably, and that in a certain sense the more Brahminism is developed the more also it lives at peace with Lamaism, in spite of their difference in point of castes.

The proof of this can be found in the large and wild tract of country which stretches in Hindostan between the northern Indus and the northern Ganges, a most interesting spot, where, it may be said, Brahminism and Lamaism are connected together, and where also, in our opinion, Buddhistic monasticism must have originated, being derived most probably from the Vanaprasta and Sanyassi orders of Brahmins, as early *at least* as the beginning of our era. Let us see if this is probable or not.

The Upper Ganges has always been the paradise of the Brahmins. To this day they are found, in those regions, more numerous and prosperous than in any other part of Hindostan. They have even pene-

trated from this spot into Nepaul, where, at a recent epoch, they have absorbed most of the civil departments of the government, and effected the complete conversion of the people to the belief in Brahma. Yet we are told that "the chief shrine, that of Sumboohnal, overlooking from a height the valley of Nepaul . . . is dedicated to Boodh, or Buddha." Thus, at least, Colonel Kirkpatrick, who visited the country in 1793, reports in his most interesting quarto volume. But it is mostly in the neighboring territory of Gurhwal, better known under the name of Serinagur, that is to be found the holy land of the Himalaya, containing the source of the Ganges and its five tributary streams. The first town above Serinagur is Josimath, the winter residence of the High-priest of the Ganges, which contains numerous temples. From this point, south as far as Meerut, and even as far down as Benares, the refuge and sanctuary of the Brahmin caste may be said to extend. Yet, although Buddhism seems to have entirely disappeared from that extensive country, it may be said confidently, that its disappearance was not due to force of arms, and to the destruction of the former Buddhist population by the sword. To be convinced of it, we have only to consider for what a lengthy period of time the religion of Gautama prevailed in those and the surrounding countries, always at peace with Brahminism, and without the least appearance of discord between them. The study of this point of history may serve better than anything else to point out to us the true origin of monastic institutions among Buddhists, and it will certainly silence forever the pretensions of those who attribute them to the Nestorian Christians. There is, fortunately, for this very occasion a learned work of Stanislas Julien, one of the most eminent Chinese scholars of our age. He was the first to study, extensively, the origin of the religion of Fo, or Buddha, in the Celestial Empire, and he was happy enough to fall on several works of great antiquity, whose authenticity he had first to ascertain. He met, it is true, at first, in opposition to his views, such men as Abel de Rémusat in France, and Wilson in India ; but the proofs he brought of his opinion were so solid and irrefutable, that all, finally, admitted them, and the Royal Society of Calcutta, on the strength of his discoveries, sent Alexander Cunningham, in 1862, to Hindostan, to visit the places made illustrious in the East by the residence of Gautama, or Sakya-Muni.

Stanislas Julien had been able to collect and read six Chinese

works on the subject of his researches. Many others have been lost. The oldest in existence is a *Memoir on the Kingdoms of Buddha*, by *Fa-hien*, a Chinese Buddhist monk, who had started on his travels in 399 of our era. But the manuscript containing only a few pages, the French *savant* preferred to translate and give to the world the *Description of Western Countries*, by *Hiouen-Thsang*, published in China, a few years after his return, by two of his contemporaries. Of the authenticity of the book there cannot be the least doubt. The traveler had spent seventeen years, from 629 to 645, in the countries west of China, chiefly in Hindostan. He was a Buddhist monk, and his chief object was to visit the places "sanctified by the presence of Sakya-Muni," and, likewise, to acquire information with respect to Brahminism. The work forms a substantial octavo volume, translated and published by the celebrated French author. We must be satisfied here with the conclusions which, we are sure, every intelligent reader cannot but elicit from the text, as translated by *S. Julien*.

First, the whole of Hindostan, but particularly the north and northwest, was found by the traveler covered with Buddhist convents, many of them containing as many as ten thousand monks. The influence of Nestorianism, which scarcely began at that epoch to penetrate Western and Southern India, cannot be supposed to have had anything to do with such a stupendous result. But, moreover, Stanislas Julien has demonstrated that there were Buddhist monks in India and China as early as 399, nay, even in 316, long before Nestorius was born. From many facts alluded to in the book, there can be no doubt that the same was true of the very beginning of our era. Nay, it is positively said in the travels of *Hiouen-Thsang*, that in the very time of *Gautama*—six hundred years before Christ—there were *religieux*, as Stanislas Julien translates the Chinese word, meaning, no doubt, Hindoo monks, who could not belong but to Brahminism. *Gautama*, in the book, meets them and speaks to them. The strict conclusion, at least, is this: that Buddhist monasticism not only was not introduced in the East by Nestorianism, but could not have been suggested, even by the earlier Christianity, which had penetrated into the country long before the age of Nestorius. Such a "monasticism" as that of Buddha must have been, therefore, of native growth; and there is no better way of accounting for it, than to suppose it had originated from the austere life of the Brahmins, a life which—we know

from the very history of Gautama—he had himself embraced, when he left the court of his parents, the wife he had married, and all the earthly possessions he previously enjoyed ; but before he broached his heresy of atheism and nihilism. Here we have, we think, the origin of Lamaism.

This last word, nevertheless, is of modern use, and represents a later phase of Buddhist superstition. As a religious, and particularly as a political institution, Buddhist monasticism was subject to the law of development ; and it is mostly in Thibet that its greatest evolution took place. It is there that most probably Lamaism proper originated ; and, as it was previously stated, the first Dalai-Lama is not older than the end of the fourteenth century. Yet in the time of Hiouen-Thsang, toward 630, there were in Hindostan an immense number of Buddhist monasteries, chiefly on the Ganges as far as its source. A strong organization was evidently required for such large establishments as these, and even in the supposition that the incarnations of the successive Buddhas was not yet mooted—we could not find any mention of it in the travels of the Chinese *religieux*—still, even in that supposition, there is no need of looking for the origin of Lamaism out of Hindostan itself ; and in the *Vana-prasta* or *Sanyassi* of the Upper Ganges, we may be allowed to find the prototype of the modern bonze or lama.

A second conclusion pointed out by the travels of Hiouen-Thsang, and of extreme importance, is the perfect tolerance, on both sides, existing for a long time, at least, between the Buddhist monks and the Brahmins in India. Had there been such wars of extermination as most modern writers on the subject suppose, we would hear of them in the interesting book translated by Julien. Hiouen-Thsang traveled in Hindostan just twelve hundred years after Gautama ; and there had not arisen yet any of those bloody struggles which are imagined without any historical foundation by modern writers. On the contrary, a kind of friendly intercourse evidently existed between both parties. All the castes of Hindostan, except that of the Brahmins, favored highly the development of Buddhism, which can be said to have, at that time, swept the country. The whole immense peninsula was literally covered with “convents ;” and these establishments were raised at the expense of the whole country, chiefly of the caste of Tschetryias ; the Brahmins themselves contributing occasionally. Everywhere in the book we see kings, that is, rulers, rajahs, as we would say, all belonging to that caste—of the Tschetryia—

spending vast sums of money to raise piles of buildings large enough to contain from one to ten thousand cenobites. The inmates lived there in retirement from the world, exactly as the innumerable lamas do now in Thibet. But there was then a peculiar custom which is not mentioned by any modern traveler in those remote countries. Every year, during the rainy season, the most learned and austere of these *religieux* flocked together in some sequestered spot to the number of several thousand, to spend as much as three whole months in "retreat"—to use the word of Julien in his translation. The object of this "retreat" was either the general interests of the sect, or the individual religious advancement of the "monks." The objects they discussed are often mentioned in the book of Hiouen-Thsang ; but they cannot bring any clear idea to the mind of a modern European ; and as Stanislas Julien could not himself make anything of them, he has merely reproduced in our own alphabetic letters the Chinese or Sanskrit words used by Hiouen. It is well known that Abel de Rémusat, who spent more than twenty years of his life in the study of Buddhism, thought that to know adequately this strange people, it is not enough to become acquainted with their history and exterior institutions, but it becomes necessary to enter into their mind, and find out the real meaning they attached to the phraseology of their doctrine. But that great and learned man could never succeed in doing so ; and it is doubtful if we will ever have a thorough understanding of it. We cannot know, consequently, the precise objects of discussion which, in the sixth century of our era, occupied the Buddhist monks in their "retreats" of three months, yonder in the wilds of Hindostan. We know, however, that they did not always confine those discussions to their own body of believers in Gautama. They often admitted strangers, and according to Hiouen-Thsang, occasionally some Brahmins, who came either to convince the chief Buddhist monks of their errors, or to become better acquainted with the tenets of *Sakya-Muni*, and embrace it in case it agreed with their views. In general, Hiouen-Thsang, in his travels, describes this intercourse of Buddhists and Brahmins in such colors, that one thing remains evident from the whole narrative, namely, that in Northern or Central India a peculiar, almost friendly, feeling existed between both parties ; whilst farther down south something of bitterness showed itself unmistakably, never amounting, however, to anything calculated to bring on open war between both. In many of those "theo-

logical" discussions in the part of the country we now call "the Presidency of Madras," there appears only a warmth of opposition akin to the angry contests between monks of various orders in Christendom during the middle ages and later on. An excited Buddhist monk puts forth his "theses" in some public locality, and dares all opponent Brahmins to oppose them, with the condition that the conquered party will consent to have his "head cut off." This last clause, however, is seldom, if ever, insisted upon; and a slighter penalty is imposed on the crestfallen disputant.

This is positively the whole amount of "war" which the book of Hiouen-Thsang testifies to, as late as twelve hundred years after Gautama. We mistake; another more wholesale way of putting down Buddhism is mentioned *once* in the book, which deserves to be transcribed *verbatim*, as we believe that the same process may have been often used by the more powerful Brahmins in the east or south of the peninsula, where Buddhism disappeared earlier, and more thoroughly than in the north and west, where it exists yet and lives at peace with its time-honored antagonist. We merely translate from the French of Stanislas Julien.—The scene takes place in Southern India.

"West of the capital"—evidently the capital of a petty kingdom—"on the slope of a mountain, stands the convent of *Fo-po-chi-lo-kia-lan* (in Sanskrit *Pourvaçilâ Sâmghârâma*); on the mountain opposite is seen the convent of *O-fa-li-chi-lo-kia-lan* (in Sanskrit *Avaraçilâ Sâmghârâma*). A king of this country had long before built them both in honor of Buddha, and had displayed in their construction all the magnificence of the palaces of Tahia (Bactriana). The thick woods which surrounded one of them, and the multitude of fountains from which gushed out large streams of water, made it a delightful place of residence. This convent was protected by heavenly spirits; and sages and saints of this world delighted to dwell in it and to walk in its beautiful grounds. During the first thousand years which followed the nirvana of Buddha there never was in it less than a thousand monks or lay people engaged in "retreat" during the rainy season. The "retreat" over, they all obtained the rank of *Arhân*, and left the spot carried through the air. A thousand years after the nirvana, men of the world and sages dwelt in it together. But ever since the last hundred years, the spirits of the mountains have ceased to entertain the same feelings toward the convent, and indulge without intermission in loud ex-

pressions of anger and violence. Those who formerly came to it for the "retreat" are now frightened, with good reason, and do not call any more for admittance. On this account it is at this time altogether abandoned, and neither *novices* nor *religieux* can be seen within its walls." \*

Supposing the same process to have been repeated for a hundred consecutive years, or even less, by the more numerous Brahmins living around each of the Buddhist convents in Hindostan, the complete disappearance of these establishments, however numerous at first, could easily be accounted for, without supposing the strategic operations of armies—horse, elephants, and foot. This, however, did not take place in the north and northwest, where Brahminism has always prospered, yet always allowed Buddhists to live in the country.

That the peculiarities of "caste" had anything to do in the contest, we can derive no proof of from the work of the Chinese traveler. It seems that, even at this day, it scarcely enters into the antagonism of Buddhism and Brahminism in Nepaul, where the conflict actually rages; but it is all a contest of doctrine, never resulting in war. The great subject of antagonism is now *food*. The Brahmins wish to convert the Buddhists to their system of total abstinence from flesh-meat; and the Lamaists show a powerful attachment to their "beef and mutton." This is the present state of the controversy. In the time of Hiouen-Thsang this "theological point" was not so strictly sectarian; and the followers of Buddha themselves considered abstinence from animal food a real virtue, and often struggled against temptation, when urged to eat a fowl. A remarkable story just in point is related at length by Hiouen; we will merely give the facts briefly: "A Buddhist monk saw a flock of geese flying over his head; he directly addressed himself to Buddha, that he might let one of them fall into his grasp. As soon as said the very leader of the band had its two wings cut off by a supernatural power, and fell at the feet of the monk. The Buddhist, moved to pity at the sight of the poor bird struggling on the ground, wingless and powerless, instead of satisfying his gluttony, let the goose die naturally, and then erected a simple but graceful marble monument over its remains." We doubt very much if a lama of this age, favored to such an extent by Buddha, would share in the scruple of his ancient *confrère*.

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\* *Histoire de Hiouen-thsang, etc.*, p. 188.

Stanislas Julien has rendered a real service to the cause of history by translating this most interesting work ; and it can be safely concluded from it that the disappearance of Buddhism in Hindostan was simply the result of a sectarian struggle ; not of an open war, resulting from political and social antagonism. As to the true epoch of origin with regard to Buddhist monasticism, it must have been coeval, if not anterior to our era. Consequently, neither primitive Christianity itself, nor Nestorianism could have suggested it, although it may have received from it some of its details. It came evidently from the rigorous asceticism of the ancient Brahmins, to whom the austerities of anchorite or cenobitic life were naturally suggested by a primitive feeling of true religion and sincere desire of pleasing God. Reference is made here to the *feeling* of four thousand years ago, not to the subsequent one ; and much less to the actual Buddhist superstition, of which there can be no question when speaking of "true religion and sincere desire of pleasing God." The pretended religion of Gautama does not admit any other god for the adepts of the sect than "the concatenation of causes and effects," and the deluded, idolatrous people who pretend to follow it, do not think in their prostrations of any other deity but of the gross imposter whom they call "the Living Buddha." In Hindostan, on the contrary, there is every reason to believe that in primitive times, at least, the numerous worshipers of the true Brahma admitted a Supreme and Infinite Lord, Creator of heaven and earth ; and convinced of their sinful state, wished to propitiate him, and expiate their transgressions of his law by a life of renouncement of the world, and by all the practices of self-abnegation prevalent in their day around the northern and southern summits of the Himalaya Mountains.

It was the same feeling which prompted so many thousands of primitive Christians to fly into the solitudes of Egypt. On this account it is not unwarrantable to assert that Paul, Antony, Pachomius, and their followers, were really bringing back the world from the odious excesses of a most corrupt civilization to the genuine impressions of the human conscience, when left to its unbiased and holy bent. The progress of mankind, as it is called, from the end of the patriarchal period down to the licentious epoch of the Caesars, had been a process of ever-increasing corruption, ending in a moral putrid sore, for which there was no remedy but in the knife and a complete excision. The monks of Egypt gave the first example of

it ; yet they merely reproduced what had been witnessed, ages before, on the banks of the Ganges and the Indus. The importance of the subject has required a greater development than is usual with us ; and it is time to pass on to the last consideration naturally derived from the same topic.

This is the spirit of genuine charity promoted by the cenobitic life, and evidenced in the monasteries of Egypt before heresy penetrated into them, and introduced the demon of discord and strife. This will scarcely be granted by the detractors from this peculiar branch of Christian institutions. They, on the contrary, pretend that a life of retirement from the world engenders selfishness and illiberality ; and that the human heart, cramped and narrowed by unnatural austerities, comes finally to hate and abhor mankind. This objection is based on a mere sophism, and because those holy men hate the spirit of the world, it is unfairly concluded that they hate also the inhabitants of the world. This assertion is contradicted by glaring and universal facts, repeated in all ages of the Church, and more patent, perhaps, in our age than at any other period, if we except the very beginning, in the apostolic period. Nothing is better proved than the ardent love manifested at all times by the monks and nuns of all orders, for their fellow-men, even if not Christian. And at the present moment, the most ignorant man, the most bigoted, among non-Catholics and non-Christians, is obliged often in spite of himself to bow down in admiration before the Sister of Charity or the servant of the poor in the most secluded of our modern convents. The fact is universal in point of space or time ; and being co-extensive in length with the history of the Church from the beginning, it is likewise as broad as the universality of the same Church through all nations. The Fathers of the first four or five centuries have in their time celebrated this spirit of monastic charity ; throughout all the mediæval period the chronicles of our ancestors have recorded it ; and in our day the same phenomenon is reproduced as universally as ever.

There is, no doubt, a discordant voice ; and men have been found from time to time, full of a bitter animosity against male or female cenobites. Books have been published, dictated by rancor, or by a foul, obscene spirit ; and the interior life of convents has been described as a hot-bed of impurity, or as a concentration of egotism. But no serious man, desirous of coming to the knowledge of the truth, can attach any importance to those libels ; and every one who respects himself closes the book in disgust if he happens to open

by chance its pages. It is in a cool, matter-of-fact history that the simple truth can be reached, and the verdict of such has always been that genuine charity, as prescribed and practiced by Christ himself, has invariably been the shining characteristic of true monastic reclusion. It would be easy to bring forward, in particular, an immense number of charitable deeds performed in those austere solitudes of Scetè, Nitria, and Tabennæ. Any one can do so by opening the pages of the book of Father Rosweide, *De vitiis Patrum*, to which brevity obliges us to refer.

It cannot be denied that later on a bitter spirit of strife, altogether adverse to Christian feeling, was inoculated by heresy into those immense establishments of Egypt where everything at first was so commendable and wonderful. The detractors of monasticism have not failed to support their cause by these remarkable anomalies: and they had, unfortunately, facts enough to quote in order to inspire their readers with the dislike they experienced themselves. But they cannot pretend that these were Catholic monasteries, and that the Church is responsible for their misbehavior, and unchristian conduct. They had openly rebelled against the decision of legitimate rulers. The voice of popes, bishops, or councils had no authority for them. If some unworthy prelates, rightfully ordained, it is true, yet guilty of open heresy or schism, were on their side, and appeared to guide them, and give them an appearance of ecclesiastical organization, they had, in fact, left the Church by embracing Eutychianism or Monophysism, as most of the monks did too early in Egypt. No one can, henceforth, call those houses Catholic monasteries; and their open spirit of rancor, hatred, carried sometimes as far as rapine and bloodshed, is merely the spirit of heresy, not of the Church. The point can be fairly offered for discussion; that if ever among orthodox religious orders any uncharitable feeling raised its head, and came to the point of scandalizing the faithful, the rulers of the Church invariably interfered, and endeavored to bring back the backsliding monks or nuns to the primitive spirit of their institution, which was always in accordance with the dictates of Christ and his apostles. There can be no doubt that a fair inquiry on the subject would result in a triumphant vindication of true monasticism. The institution certainly has a human side, and on this account is subject to remissness and deterioration; but there is then a sure remedy in the supreme control of the Church over them, which can proceed as far as a total suppression.

It would carry us too far to enter into particular details of the charitable feeling animating in all ages Christian cenobites and ascetics ; and after all the trouble of doing it, the whole might be considered by some as only *a parte* statements, against which serious rebuttals could be brought out. It seems better to discuss briefly the general question of probability and likelihood, and to consider for a moment if a life of celibacy and seclusion from the world, as prompted by Christian interior feeling of piety and devotedness, is really calculated to harden the heart and render it insensible and apathetic. For this is precisely at the bottom of the objection : " Those who do not marry, and separate themselves from their fellow-men, cannot be susceptible of the kindest emotions of our nature, and for them true charity is almost impossible."

The answer is plain and sufficient : All depends on the motives which prompt a man to embrace a life of single-blessedness and solitude. Those who do so through misanthropy cannot but be selfish and hard-hearted ; and for them what we call charity is the virtue of fools. This is perfectly true. But when the determination is dictated by the true love of God and of Christian purity, it is undoubtedly the mark and at the same time the active cause of the deepest, sweetest, and tenderest love of mankind ; so that all the most attractive Christian feelings center around and in the cell of the cenobite.

Since the Incarnation of the Son of God, the divine love cannot be separated from that of Christ. This deep feeling of all true Christians in all ages is of so remarkable a nature that it struck with wonder men who could scarcely understand it. Mr. Lecky has tried to describe it in one of the first pages of his work on *European Morals*, and it is undoubtedly one of the most eloquent passages of the book. Napoleon I. was also deeply impressed with the same astonishing fact of millions of men loving so ardently the Founder of the Christian religion, and spoke of it in most glowing words to his friends at St. Helena. But neither the one nor the other paid attention to a character of that love of Christ which is nevertheless always present to the mind of the true Christian. They entirely forgot the very words of our Lord, which can alone give a true idea of it : " If you love me, keep my commandments," and these " commandments " are all comprised in the twofold injunction " to love God above all things, and our neighbor as ourselves."

The follower of the Saviour knows intimately that his love of God

would be repudiated in heaven, if it were not accompanied, and, we may say, characterized by an ardent love for all men, and chiefly for their souls. To be consumed by the ardent desire of co-operating with Christ in the salvation of souls, is the only true love of the Redeemer which is worth anything in the eyes of the Christian ; and whoever loves the souls of men feels likewise a deep pity for their temporal misery, and the physical and mental sufferings to which the majority of them are condemned in this life. This feeling it is that has filled so many religious houses, as we call them, throughout the long history of the Church. To bring the pagan to the knowledge of the true God, and of his law, teach him how to subdue his passions, and listen to the voice of his conscience ; to convince the heretic of his errors, induce him to re-enter the fold of the true flock and to give himself entirely to the guidance of the only Shepherd—the vicar of Christ ; to allure the sinner to a better life, and win him over to the side of virtue—this is the great object which draws into the walls of convents so many thousands of fervent Christians, and moves them to embrace a life repugnant to the promptings of our fallen nature ; and it is because they love God that they thus devote themselves to the spiritual welfare of their fellow-men. But in thinking principally of their souls, they do not forget the needs of the body ; and it can be safely maintained that there is not on earth any kind of human distress which is not assuaged by a particular Church institution, and to which is not assigned a special body of holy cenobites.

There is no need of proving it by peculiar facts drawn from the well-known history of the monasteries of Egypt. The task would be too long, since to make it satisfactory it would be proper to go through the large work of Father Rosweide. But it has been said that it was not the love of God only which prompted them to those charitable deeds, but likewise the love of purity ; and because of the consequence not being at first sight so evident, something must be added here to the subject.

The senseless objection is often brought forward, that monks and nuns cannot be the proper persons to feel compassion for the miseries of mankind, on account of the state of celibacy they have embraced, and the obligation they have imposed on themselves of keeping under the least rebellion of the senses. It might be true if lust was love, and if chastity was insensibility ; but the one is not more false than the other. There are, indeed, cold natures—men, in appear-

ance, exempt from human frailty, for whom the soft impression of pity, of tenderness, is unmeaning, if it is not unrighteous ; these are not precisely the Christian models of holy purity. But the most spotless virtue can exist, and often exists, indeed, with the most acute sensibility ; and the more the heart is pure the brighter the fire of holy affection will burn. There can be no doubt of it, modesty is the twin sister of simplicity ; and where you see prudery and squeamishness, there, also, is too often found interior naughtiness, when it does not go as far as foul corruption. In general, it can be set down, that if, in the public ward of an hospital, you remark in a sister the greatest abandon and sympathy, there also you will find the greatest purity of heart, and the most spotless virtue. Holy chastity is the prompter of love ; and no affection is more tender than that with which the senses have no part. Has it never occurred to the revilers of monastic continency, that the inclinations of the baser part of man can have no influence on the higher emotions of the heart, except in stifling them and preventing them from bursting forth and expanding out in their native beauty ? Have they never reflected that the best means of developing the moral attributes of the soul, chiefly her love, must consist in keeping down animalism and its physical perturbation ? There is no need of reading the standard works on mysticism to understand this ; the most simple treatises on physiology will give it out in their first elements.

It must be true, therefore, that a severe life of continency is the best calculated to excite the most charitable and kindly feelings ; and, consequently, the establishments where Christian charity is better understood and practiced are those in which the religious rules of holy chastity are most strictly enforced, or, rather, most willingly embraced and lovingly followed. These few words must suffice for a most interesting subject, which could give rise to the highest and noblest considerations.

#### 6. *Rapid Conversion of Egypt.*

A short narrative will now suffice to place under the eyes of the reader the picture of the conversion of Egypt ; and judging of the main agencies in this stupendous work, that of God will appear pre-eminent. Already, in the time of Origen, one-half of the population of Alexandria was Christian, and the interior of the country, as far south as the borders of Nubia, must have kept pace with the

northern metropolis. For it is, above all, in the south that the work of evangelization must have been early and swift. St. Mark himself, according to his *Acts*, began his ministry in the Thebais, and did not proceed to Alexandria before he had spent twelve years in traveling all over Upper Egypt. The life of Pachomius, still more than that of Antony, afforded, later on, a striking proof of it. Born of pagan parents, before the end of the third century, on the very confines of Nubia, he was enrolled in the Roman troops at the age of twenty, and sent down the Nile to Thebes, then called Diospolis. Thebes at the time was full of Christians, and the young soldier was attracted toward them by their charity. For, as the new recruits were treated with harshness by the superior officers, and kept, probably, from deserting, by severe measures, the Christians of the city came to their assistance as if they had been their own children or relatives, and procured for them everything they were in need of. And this circumstance, so extraordinary at the time, became the occasion of the conversion of young Pachomius. All the details of his life—the presence of Christians, not only in large cities, as Thebes, but also in small towns, as *Chenoboscia*, where he received baptism; the multitude of anchorites in all the surrounding country, so that he could find directly a master of spiritual life in Palæmon as soon as he wished to leave the world; the great number of disciples who flocked to him directly he opened the doors of a monastery at the southern extremity of Egypt; many other less striking particulars demonstrate that the whole country was then rapidly becoming Christian.

But the history of the convent he opened became a still more remarkable proof of it. This was the celebrated house known under the name of Tabennæ, built by Pachomius at the very entrance of the Nubian desert. A few words of discussion on the exact position of it will not be uninteresting. There are still at this time some difficult points concerning it, which the Bollandists endeavor to clear up, with their usual sagacity and erudition. But to us the words of Palladius appear entirely to decide the question. The author of the *Historia Lausiaca* had left Galatia, where he was born, to become a monk in Egypt. He traveled all over the country before he settled in a convent of Upper Egypt, to die, finally, Bishop of Hellenopolis. In his remarkable work he describes the monastery of Tabennæ, which he had visited, and of which he gives the exact geographical position, in the *Epistola ad Lausum*, prefaced to his

history. He states positively that he intends to write about the monks whom he had visited personally "in the desert of Egypt, and in Libya, and in the Thebais, and in Syene, below which are found those who are called Tabennites." Nothing can be clearer than this short passage; the last phrase of it means that Tabennæ was near Syene, and the position of this city is well ascertained. It was just on the Nile, under the Tropic, and is known at this time under the name of Assouan. Abraham Ortelius confirms this opinion in his map of Ancient Egypt, where he calls *Tabennæ* the island of Philæ or Elephantine, just south of Syene. This monastery was, therefore, on the limits of Egypt and Nubia, in the neighborhood of the black savages called by the Romans Blemmyes, a pretended nomadic race of Ethiopia, fabled to have been without heads; their eyes and mouths being on their breast. The monastery, however, must not have been in the island of Philæ, but very near.

This was then, undoubtedly, a fantastic region, the cradle of monsters, and the nursery of wonders. Yet how soon it became a land of holiness, and a well-known refuge for Christian travelers, like Palladins and Cassianus, and austere monks, like all the followers of Pachomius! In a short time their number increased so prodigiously, that to use the words of the Bollandists: "It became necessary to distribute the multitude of monks in many houses, each one having its superior and minor officers. Nay, more, colonies of them had to be sent to found new monasteries. All those establishments, however, depended, in spirituals and temporals, on one Supreme Head and Father." The whole region around Syene became thus not only a Christian, but a monastic country. Every bee-hive of cenobites contained a number of separate buildings; all of them together forming one convent, with one single Head. Each particular house, however, contained a special colony with its own Superior, dependent on the Head of the whole convent. As soon as this monastic city was complete, and new members called for admittance, a colony was sent abroad to found a new monastery, modeled on the pattern of the first; all those various organizations acknowledging the rule of the common Father at Tabennæ. Thus the Egyptian Church already witnessed the spectacle destined to be repeated, later on, all over Europe, in the various religious orders founded by Benedict, Francis, Bernard, and so many others. It was precisely the same organism which God suggested first to Pachomius, on the border of the negro country along the Nile.

As to the total amount of people existing in the whole organization, the exact calculation made by several successive witnesses at the time, might well excite our wonder. During the very life of Pachomius, when Orsisius of Nitria came to visit him, the number, it is true, scarcely exceeded three hundred, so that a couple of large boats, on the Nile, sufficed to take to market the various articles they manufactured, and bring back the provisions required for the whole community. At the death of the patriarch, the number of cenobites had increased so considerably, that each particular monastery had to construct its own boats for the same objects. Two years later, when the young Ammon entered the convent of Pabau, at some distance from Tabennæ, this single establishment of Pabau numbered six hundred monks; and the whole Order counted as many as seven large convents founded by Pachomius, to which Theodore, his successor, soon added three others. When Macarius of Alexandria joined the Order, the monastery of Tabennæ alone contained fourteen hundred inmates, and all the others together about seven thousand. In a visit which, subsequently, Palladius paid to Tabennæ, he found in that single establishment three thousand cenobites, more than double the number previously counted, all living under the rule of the Abbot Ammon. A little later on, Cassianus, at the beginning of the fifth century, came to Egypt, and he speaks in his celebrated *Conferences* of five thousand brothers, under a single abbot, which supposed very near fifty thousand for the whole Order. There can, therefore, be no surprise, that in the time of St. Jerome, when he lived in Bethlehem, and received frequently accurate news from Egypt, he stated in his *Prologus ad Regulam Pachomii*, that at the festival of Easter, when, according to the rule, all the members of the whole Order who could, met together to partake of the Eucharist, nearly fifty thousand men used to fulfill that holy duty, in a body. And nothing is said in all those enumerations, of the convents of nuns which Pachomius had founded, likewise, and which necessarily must have increased in a proportionate ratio.

All these calculations are here given exactly as they are reported by the Bollandists: “*De SS. Pachomio et Theodoro Abb. die decima quarta Maii.*” Two consequences are necessarily drawn from these facts; the first, that the whole country to a great distance around must have been Christianized by the exertions of so many holy men. For it is not to be supposed that those vast establishments were

crowded together in a few miles of territory. In fact, mention is made in a very precise manner that one of the monasteries of the Order was built as far north as Latopolis—now Esneh—near Thebes. Thus a large district was embraced by the monastic institutions centering in Tabennæ; and the same being surely the case, although not perhaps to the same extent, for the establishments of Scetè, of Nitria, of Lower Thebais, the reader can at once understand the mighty impulse given in Egypt to the conversion of the people. The true Christian, however, comprehends that as no worldly motive or agencies can be supposed at work in the scheme, the whole of it must be referred to God and to Christ, who alone could win over to himself by heavenly aspirations so many men of the Egyptian race, the children, or at any rate the grandchildren, of the most obstinate idolaters antiquity had ever seen.

The second consequence resulting logically from the same facts is a strong confirmation of previous reflections on the social effects of the labor of the monks on the world at large, particularly with respect to the substitution of free for slave labor. Here there is the positive statement made by contemporary writers that at the very origin of the order of Pachomius, when each monastery contained at most two or three hundred monks, two large boats were required for sending manufactured goods to market and bringing back provisions; and as soon as the increase of cenobites becomes more rapid and spreads further, all the convents are immediately engaged in the purpose of building boats for the same objects. This took place under Theodore, a short time after the death of the founder. The passage being important, because even hagiographers imagine that the Egyptian monks scarcely produced anything in their workshops worth mentioning, we quote a short passage taken from the "*Acta Pachomii*":\* "Whilst Orsisius was making the visit of the monasteries Theodore was far from enjoying rest. Lately large farms had been added to their earthly possessions, and the number of their boats had prodigiously multiplied. Each monastery was then occupied in the construction of ships, and thus the brethren were sorely exercised by many distracting cares. When Pachomius ruled them, they were not so many, and, being intent on living free from the servitude of earthly concerns, they found the yoke of God light and easy. But at this time the abbot, noticing that some even of the old brethren

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\* Ch. xii., § 93.

inclined to introduce changes in their former way of life, was heavily grieved at the thought, and took it deeply to heart."

These words indicate such a rapid development of industrial and agricultural pursuits among the Egyptian monks, that the second successor of Pachomius feared it would cause the ruin of discipline, which misfortune he tried to ward off, no doubt, by all means in his power. But the fact of such an early development as this among the Eastern convents confirms the important reflections developed a moment ago ; and those who pretend that labor in Egypt occupied the monks only a short time every day, and could not result in any thing considerable in point of industry and production, have not evidently reflected on this passage of the *Acts* of St. Pachomius, whose authenticity cannot be denied by any one who simply reads them, and which are, moreover, supported by many other allusions or statements of the same import, although not perhaps so clear.

The Nile, near the first cataract, was thus covered with numerous fiotillas of vessels, employed on a very different errand from the business carried on of old by the ships which sailed on the same waters. Formerly the vessels of the Egyptians on the Upper Nile were chiefly occupied in a large carrying trade from Nubia and Nigritia, consisting mainly, as in our day, of ivory and slaves. The Nubians and the negroes, whose features can still be easily distinguished on the old monuments, were then reduced to slavery by means very similar to those described by Sir Samuel Baker in his *Ismaïlia*. But a mighty change had come, scarcely perceived yet by the Romans of that age. The boats floating on the Nile in the third century of our era, were manned by monks intent only on *serving God* ; and they carried to the markets of Diospolis (Thebes) and of Tentyra the product of the free labor of fifty thousand men, who had willingly devoted themselves to a life of industry as well as of prayer. This was undoubtedly a great revolution in the ideas and social manners of that epoch.

But the same country witnessed another change of as mighty an import as the last. From the whole tenor of the biographies of the monks written at that period, it must be concluded that idolatry had already almost disappeared from those regions. It is sometimes—in fact, seldom—related that one of those holy men was born of pagan parents—this was the case with Pachomius—but of the display of paganism in a territory formerly covered by splendid temples filled

with numerous priests and attendants, not a word is ever said. The former deities appear to have been already unknown ; and the God of the Christians is the only one mentioned with reverence in those pages. The *religious* pageants of almost daily occurrence a century or two previously, the stupendous processions, in particular, described formerly by Herodotus as he had witnessed them, and which must have continued to a very recent age, were now not only disused, but literally forgotten and absolutely unknown. In their place new pageants and very different processions had been introduced by Christianity. The following short description, taken from the *Acts of Pachomius* in the Bollandists, will give some faint idea of it :\* “The rumor had spread that Athanasius was sailing on the Nile, and coming up to the Thebais. The Abbot Theodore chose directly those of the fathers and of the brethren who had the best voice and were best able to sing, and went to meet him beyond the Hermopolitan monastery, where the archbishop had not yet arrived. As soon as the brethren perceived him from afar they hastened toward him. *An innumerable multitude of men covered both banks of the river* : there were bishops—*non pauci*—clerics, and monks in great number from many houses. As soon as Athanasius saw and recognized them, he could not contain himself, but exclaimed, speaking of the monks : ‘Who are those who seem to run like clouds and swim on through the air like doves with their covey ?’ . . . Theodore, meanwhile, leading the humble donkey on which the archbishop rode, went forward in the midst of the choir of the singing brethren ; others, on both sides, carried lamps and torches. . . . But the Pontiff turning toward the other bishops, said to them : ‘See with what rapture the Father of so many monks precedes us. We do not deserve the name of Fathers. Here is the true one. Blessed are those, and worthy of every blessing, who constantly bear the cross of their Lord, who esteem the contempt of men to be their glory, and perpetual labor to be their rest.’”

The remarkable spectacle offered here is most eloquent in its mute language, when the mind reflects, as it cannot but do, on the astonishing change which it supposes in the country. It is no more the Egypt known to the student of ancient history ; it is not, however, modern Egypt, such as it has been since the Mussulman invasion ; it is a country altogether unlike the old and the new Egypt, but

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\* Cap. xii., § 92.

perfectly similar to what the whole of Europe was from the tenth to the sixteenth century. How many archbishops and popes have been received in the Benedictine, Cistercian, and Augustinian monasteries of France or Germany, during the mediæval period, in the midst of surroundings which seem to us the exact reproduction of this visit of Athanasius to the monks of Tabennæs? If France and Germany, in the thirteenth century, were thorough Christian countries, can we not say the same of Southern Egypt at the beginning of the fourth?

It is not surely pretended that idolatry disappeared as early in the Delta as in the neighborhood of Syene and Thebes. Alexandria, already one-half Christian at the time of Origen, contained yet a large pagan population under Theodosius. Many causes contributed to this attachment of the inhabitants of that city to the former superstitions. Theodosius met with as much opposition in Alexandria as in Rome to the decree by which he ordered to close the temples and to discontinue idolatrous rites. The celebrated *Serapeum* was turned into a kind of fortress, where the pagans defied the authority of the emperor; and often Christian blood flowed in the streets under the rule of a most Christian prince. Nothing would do but the complete demolition of the temple of Serapis, which Theodosius intrusted to men of prudence and energy. Henceforth paganism ceased to exist all over the country. But it is a mistake to suppose that the imperial decree was a necessary act to bring on that mighty revolution. God had already brought it about. Except Alexandria and a few other spots, the whole country was thoroughly Christian; particularly was this the case in Upper Egypt. Alexandria, without the action of Theodosius, would soon have given up her attachment to idolatry; as a single city could not withstand the remainder of the world. Yet the majority of historians attribute the destruction of polytheism in Egypt, as well as all over the East, to Theodosius. It was so complete that a few years later, not only the Egyptian mythology, but even that of Greece, which chiefly flourished at Alexandria, was far more unknown to the educated men of the period than it is among us at the present day. Of this we have lately discovered a curious instance, which deserves to be briefly mentioned. Cosmas Indicopleustes relates, in his most interesting book, that being in Abyssinia—Montfaucon calculates that this must have been in 522—he accompanied King Elesbaa in his expedition against the Homerites, across the Red Sea. In Adulis, on the African shore

of the Red Sea, a Greek inscription had been found, and the king ordered Cosmas and another Egyptian monk, who was with him, to translate it in Ethiopian. They both set at it ; but could not agree about one point : the inscription was written in honor of a Grecian god, but was it Mercury—Hermes—or some other less known deity ? He was called the “god of speech,” and Cosmas maintained that this was the character of Mercury ; whilst the other monk pretended that Mercury’s character was to be the “god of riches”—he might have said, “of robbers ;” and they both began to quarrel, to the great surprise of King Elesbaa. Neither the one nor the other knew that Mercury enjoyed the privilege of both functions. But what is most remarkable is, that *neither the one nor the other* had any idea of Thoth, the Egyptian god, whose name in Greek was Hermes, or Mercury in Latin, and to whom probably the inscription had been dedicated, although it was written in Greek, the official language under the Ptolemies. We scarcely believe it possible to find any other more remarkable proof of the rapidity, or rather suddenness, with which paganism had been buried in oblivion on the banks of the Nile. It was far different in Italy or even in Gaul, where, about the same time, Ausonius wrote verse so thoroughly imbued with pagan mythology, that for a long time learned men were inclined to believe that he was not a Christian.

In concluding this particular branch of the subject it is proper to remind the reader of the old character of Egypt, mentioned in a previous chapter—namely, its unchangeableness and constant adherence for so many ages to its social, political, and religious customs, but, above all, to its superstitious rites and peculiar doctrines. The teachings of Mark, the disciple of Peter, communicated at first to a few men, sufficed in three or four centuries to make the country so thoroughly Christian that at the coming of Omar and his Saracens, the whole of it worshiped Christ, and the posterity of the Egyptians of that epoch has remained the same ever since ; diminishing in number, certainly, under the yoke of the Turks, and losing gradually more and more their importance ; yet constant in their attachment to a faith which had been unfortunately weakened by schism and heresy. In separating themselves from the center of the Church they have, like the other schismatic sects of the Orient, become incapable of entering into the natural development of Christianity, which has raised Europe to such a height of civilization by making it a progressive commonwealth under the direction of Rome ; they

have become crystallized, as it were, and almost lifeless, and have been on that account far less able to resist the pressure of the Saracens, than would otherwise have been the case ; still, they have kept their faith, such as it was at the moment of their separation. This fact deserves to be pointed out at the end of these considerations.

## CHAPTER VII.

SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN NUBIA AND ETHIOPIA—CHRISTIAN MONUMENTS AND INSCRIPTIONS IN NUBIA AND THE ETHIOPIA OF MEROË—ORIGIN OF THE RELIGION OF CHRIST IN THE ETHIOPIA OF AXUM.

1. *A few words on the ancient Ethiopians.*

NUBIA and Ethiopia have been from the most early ages inhabited by the same race, very different from the Egyptian. It is native of Africa, and called Cushite by modern ethnographers, as being the posterity of Cush. The Ethiopia of Meroë, which embraced Nubia, was the only one known to the ancients; and important researches have in our day thrown a great interest on it. In most remote times it had already acquired a universal renown, and must have been highly civilized. No ancient author speaks of it but in the loftiest terms of admiration and praise. Its inhabitants were said to be "long-lived," "happy," and "most holy." Homer represents Zeus as leaving Mount Olympus with all his celestial court, and traveling through heaven to Ethiopia, when he wished to enjoy peace and repose. On the strength of some interesting bits of old history and poetry, many writers, in the last, and at the beginning of this century, thought that Ethiopia had been the first part of Africa truly civilized, and that it was the real source of the first culture, science, and religion of Egypt.

Modern discoveries in the land of the Pharaohs have not apparently confirmed this view; and, as usual in such cases as this, a complete reversal of opinion has lately taken place. Many Egyptologists have openly advanced the idea that the high appreciation of Ethiopia by ancient writers had no foundation in fact, and was merely the result of ignorance and fancy. According to them, all the old culture and art on the Upper Nile came from Egypt, and it can be demonstrated that in this last country Memphis and the Pyramids existed before Thebes and its temples; consequently the arts and sciences traveled from north to south, not in the contrary direction. Nay, it seems

very improbable, if not impossible, to several modern authors of note that Ethiopia should ever have had a civilization of its own, as the black race of that country seems to them of an inferior type, and scarcely capable of a high degree of refinement.

This, evidently, is going too far ; and there are abundant proofs of the contrary. All intelligent travelers who have visited Nubia speak highly of the character of its inhabitants, who are certainly the descendants of the old Ethiopians. Caillaud, particularly, is emphatic on the subject in his *Voyage à Meroë*. But independently of authors of *Travels* the most eminent ethnographers of our age vindicate sufficiently the claims of the Nubians to a high standing on the social scale. Rawlinson revives, in fact, the former favorable opinion of the Ethiopians, by the most interesting details he furnishes on the Cushite race, to which certainly the inhabitants of the Upper Nile belonged. From his scholarly notes on the subject it is evident that in the most primitive ages the direct sons of Cush were most powerful and widely spread. They had not only colonized a great part of the interior of Africa, but likewise occupied all the coasts of Southern and Eastern Arabia, and spread themselves along the southern shores of Persia, so as to become masters of the whole coast of the Indian Ocean as far as the Indus. They proved in the end to be a great maritime power ; and the Arabian fleets which, in antiquity, covered the seas of India and the countries beyond, were surely manned by the sons of Cush, who had come originally from Africa. It is well known that in the most remote period of ancient history the southern and eastern Arabians were in the Oriental world what the Phœnicians became in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean. Everything tends to prove that the commerce of the whole globe was concentrated in the hands of those two powerful nations. And the Arabians of the primitive Orient were not Arabs ; they did not belong to the Semitic stock, as the wretched Moslems of modern times do ; they were truly the posterity of Cush ; they belonged to the Hamitic family. This is now admitted by all ethnographers worthy of the name. Consequently, when they fell under the sweet yoke of Christ and his Church, it was the first undoubted conquest of Christianity over the posterity of the second son of Noah. The process of their submission to the messengers of God is now the subject on which we enter, and to which we can devote but a few pages.

What is their real position in the world as a race ? A word has

just been said of the extent of their sway in ancient times, and of their power in the Eastern world. But as to their physical characteristics in the present age, must they be placed on a par with the wretched negro, and have they wholly degenerated from their former vigor? All modern travelers who have visited them deny it emphatically. They all say that there is nothing of the negro in their features; and their finely-molded limbs might furnish admirable models to the painter and the sculptor. The drawings of Caillaud, published in his work on Meroë, would rather recall to the mind the Grecian statues than what is generally designated as the "African type." It is true the French traveler has not tried in his etchings to reproduce the color of the race; and his representations may not be on this account perfectly exact. Yet it is well known that they are not properly black, but of a deep and rich bronze tint, giving them, when motionless, the appearance of real statues. As a point of comparison the Egyptian race, preserved yet in the Copts, would be the most appropriate; and all intelligent travelers agree that the Nubians' physical characteristics are of a superior order to those of the Copts. There can be, therefore, no question of the negro when we speak of them.

As to their actual vigor and mental energy, they, no doubt, greatly surpass in these points the modern Egyptians; and if during many ages they have not given any proof of it, and left the country along the Nile a black desert of sand, it is surely owing to the Mussulman oppression under which they have groaned, as well as their northern neighbors on the Nile. It is concerning these western Ethiopians that we must address ourselves the question, Have they ever been Christian? and if so, at what epoch, and by what channel did they receive the doctrines of the Gospel? The eastern population belonging to the same race, namely, the Abyssinians, properly so called, are left momentarily out of view. It is well known at what time these received Christianity, which they practice yet; and who were their first apostle and teachers. But with respect to the Nubians the same questions are not so easily answered, and will require for a moment our undivided attention.

## 2. *Origin of Christianity in Nubia.*

At first sight it appears useless to make this a subject of inquiry. There is scarcely a vestige of Christianity remaining along the

Nile, above the first cataract ; and ecclesiastical history is completely silent with regard to Nubia. The Coptic Church yet in existence in Egypt has no connection whatever with the populations living south of Philæ, although it is said there is now a small Coptic congregation at Berber, in Sennaar, which probably has been formed since the new government in Egypt has shown more toleration. The monophysite archbishop of Alexandria, on whom depends the Abuna of the Abyssinians in the east, does not seem to pretend to any jurisdiction over the vast country directly south of the Upper Thebais. Has it always been so ? And can we believe that when the monks of Pachomius were so numerous around Syene, and when the whole country, in fact, was Christian, a few miles south of it nobody had ever heard of Christ ? And what renders the phenomenon more strange is that until the beginning of our era, Ethiopia, along the Nile, had invariably shared the fate of Egypt, so that prosperity, disasters, even civilization, and the arts and sciences, had been, as it were, common to both countries.

This remark is not properly ours; we find it in a book—now almost entirely forgotten—of Father Kircher; his *Prodromus Coptus*. This truly learned work is now completely set aside when there is question of ancient Egypt, probably because the endeavor it contains of finding the key to the hieroglyphs is admittedly a failure. People do not reflect that in the time of Kircher, such an endeavor as this was absolutely hopeless, and would have remained so to our own days, had it not been for the discovery of the *Rosetta Stone*. The trilingual inscription engraved on it was the only sure means of arriving at a true interpretation of the hieroglyphs ; and without it Young and Champollion would not have become the celebrated men they are.

It is, therefore, the author of the *Prodromus Coptus* who remarked, that of old the same religion, or rather the same idolatrous rites, were common to both nations—the Egyptian and the Ethiopian. Diodorus Siculus had long before adverted to it ; and in our own day the description of the old monuments of Nubia, as published by Gau and Caillaud, are a positive proof of it ; there is not the slightest difference between them. Kircher concludes from it that it is but natural that the same Christianity should have existed in both ; and this reflection is confirmed in his opinion by the fact that the *era martyrum*, namely, the first year of Diocletian's persecution, is the starting-point of modern chronology for both of them. In his

time this was not ascertained with respect to Nubia ; and in speaking of Ethiopians he meant only the Abyssinians, who, having received everything from Alexandria, followed also in their computation of time the Egyptian *era martyrum*. But in several Christian inscriptions found lately in Nubia the assertion of Kircher has been found to be correct for it also, and to be valid, consequently, for a country absolutely unknown in his time.

This is a first ray of light : there are inscriptions on the Upper Nile, and it must be added, ruins of buildings, with sculptures and paintings, which prove that Christianity had been preached and even flourished for a time, down to the fifteenth degree of latitude—that is, to the very heart of Africa, to the Soudan itself, a few hundred miles distant from the great lakes of Victoria and Albert Nyanza. This is worthy of a serious consideration. A few years ago this was absolutely unknown.

All that Scripture and early ecclesiastical history tell us is that an eunuch of a Queen of Meroë had been baptized by the Deacon Philip, a few days after Pentecost, and had returned to his country rejoicing in the great spiritual boon he had received. St. Matthew, likewise, is reported to have been the apostle of Ethiopia, by a very respectable tradition. But as all the details contained in his *Acts*, either Latin or Greek, are rejected as spurious, nothing, in fact, is known thereby of the early evangelization of the interior of Africa. Yet, when a traveler ascends the Nile above Philæ, which is really the gate of Nubia, he meets, on both banks of the river, with innumerable monuments attesting the former greatness of the country ; and if many of these splendid pyramids, temples, palaces, etc., are undoubtedly Egyptian of the pagan period, there are here and there monuments of a very different kind, which prove that the sway of the Church had once extended over this part of the world, and that it was, as in Egypt, a monastic Church, in all its chief elements.

No traveler, unfortunately, has ever gone on through that wilderness, with the intention of publishing to the world what remains there of former Christian tradition and history. No one has devoted his time and his money, and exposed his life, for the purpose of describing the ruins of former monasteries and churches, and of transcribing everything which speaks of Christ and of virtue. If a pilgrim of this kind had undertaken the task, he would have neglected the splendid edifices raised in the time of the Pharaohs, and left to others the more worldly care of surprising the eye

with the long lines of Egyptian sculptures and colossal kings and gods. But he would have stopped wherever he perceived the brick constructions of a later period, bearing on their walls the meek and holy forms of apostles, bishops, and monks ; and copying with the utmost exactness the numerous Greek inscriptions, Byzantine or not, which are found all around, he would have enriched us with an altogether new chapter of the history of the early Church.

Caillaud and Gau went on their travels with a very different intention. We do not speak of Salt, who wrote chiefly on Abyssinia, nor of other Englishmen who were merely tourists and story-mongers. The first—Caillaud—did not belong any more—thank God !—to that generation of Frenchmen who sneered at everything Christian, and could see but ugliness in the only truly beautiful objects the world has ever contemplated. He does not speak contemptuously of the Christian relics which came in his way ; although most of the time he dismisses the subject by saying they were “insignificant.” They appeared truly so to him, when he compared them with the gigantic constructions of a former pagan age. Thus he applied himself to reproducing in his splendid *Atlas* the marvels of the Pharaonic period. In the text he often mentions that he met here and there with inferior representations of Christian bishops and monks ; but he did not care to transfer them to the immense folio pages of his royal engravings. Of inscriptions he seldom speaks, and not a single one that we know has he ever reproduced, Christian or pagan. The fact is, he was not sufficiently learned to do so ; and had nobody with him to help in the task.

The same would have been the case with Gau, most probably, had he not met with Niebuhr before he left Europe for Africa. Gau was only an architect, and his intention at first was merely to improve in his art by going to contemplate the most gigantic buildings ever erected by man. The great German writer on Roman history, in his interview with him, somewhat expanded his ideas, and promised that if, besides reproducing by engraving the temples and other edifices, he took care to copy the inscriptions, Egyptian or Greek, chiefly the last, he—Niebuhr—would write commentaries on them. It is owing to this simple promise that we know something of Christian Nubia. But all the circumstances just narrated intimate that the public cannot expect much from the works of Caillaud and Gau in point of ecclesiastical antiquities. The very large folio volume of this last author contains comparatively very few inscriptions of a

character to interest us ; and there is positively none of any kind in the work of Caillaud. Niebuhr looked chiefly to those of the Ptolemies and of the Romans ; and he had no desire whatever to subserve Christian archaeology, although he did not make any exception against it. Consequently, of the dozen or two inscriptions which he commented upon, in Gau's volume, there are very few indeed of any value for our purpose. The long one of Silco, even, which later on struck Letronne so forcibly as proving that Nubia, at that time, was thoroughly Christian, is supposed by the celebrated German writer as the work of a pagan addicted particularly to the worship of Mars ! We will have occasion to speak of it presently. But it is really to be deplored that so far no traveler actuated by a sincere love for the Church of God, has gone to that desolate country, with the intention of devoting all his time to that holy purpose, leaving aside entirely the monuments of pagan Ethiopia. It is not certainly in the actual foreign staff of the Khedive that any such can be found.

It is time to come to some details, and first, a circumstance must be mentioned of a striking character, alluded to by Letronne in his too scanty *Matériaux pour l'Histoire du Christianisme en Egypte, en Nubie, et en Abyssinie*. The title of this book is poorly carried out in the work itself, composed of three short memoirs on such an immense subject ; but, at least the French *savant* had understood from the inscriptions published by Gau, that there was an *Histoire du Christianisme en Nubie* which has not yet been written. And the *very striking circumstance* referred to by him, is this : in the northern part of Nubia, that which is contiguous to the Thebais, the Greek inscriptions are partly pagan and partly Christian ; whilst farther south, and to the end of the country in the very heart of Africa, *not a single Greek inscription has been found which is not Christian*. The underline is ours ; but there is reason to be surprised that Letronne himself did not italicize the phrase. The main meaning of it, in our opinion, is this : the Greek colonists and merchants of Egypt, who went there to make money, many of whom were polytheists, did not venture farther than the first cataract, on account of the forbidding character of the ulterior country ; the missionary monks and bishops, on the contrary, of Greek origin, or at least with some knowledge of that language, were more attracted by the desire of saving souls, than repelled by the heat of the climate and the fearful aspect of a sandy desert. They went as far as it was then possible to go ; and had not their labors been interrupted by Mussulman-

ism, they would have, ages ago, discovered the sources of the Nile. There is nothing exaggerated in this last remark; they were already only fifteen degrees from the great Nyanza lakes.

This has been said to be the *main meaning* of the strange fact that all Greek inscriptions are Christian in the interior of Nubia and Ethiopia, whilst many of them are pagan in the northern part of it, on the confines of Egypt proper. Another circumstance, however, may have also contributed to it, namely, the presence of the savage Blemmyes, who often invaded the country around Syene as far north as Thebes, and who do not seem to have extended their devastating incursions as far south as Meroë. But of this anon.

These scanty details go to prove that Christianity prevailed in Western Ethiopia, Nubia, and Egypt, all along the Nile from Khartoum to Alexandria. But a great deal more is shortly to be said in support of this opinion. At this time, however, the study of the question is confined to Ethiopia and Nubia, and to the material extent over which the sway of the Church then extended in those wild regions. It comprised not less than nine geographical degrees from north to south in Nubia alone; but on account of the extraordinary windings of the Nile, the actual space was far greater. Expressed in distances to which Americans are used, it would be at least from the city of New York to the southern limit of the State of Georgia, and this only from Syene southward. But the main question at this moment regards only the true epoch of the introduction of Christianity in that country, and the probable means used for it. Unfortunately the historian is reduced to mere conjectures, on account probably of the imperfect study of the inscriptions yet existing. Niebuhr and Letronne do not agree on the subject. The Frenchman is positive that it was under Justinian only that the country became thoroughly Christian; and the German says that although the opinion of Letronne can be supported, yet he inclines rather to admit "from the testimony of Eutiches of Alexandria," that it was only "after the conquest of Egypt by Omar that idolatry was renounced by the Nubians, and the Christian monophysism of Alexandria substituted in its place." A strange opinion, indeed! There are strong reasons for thinking that both are in error; but the last—Niebuhr—unaccountably so. It would have been at the very moment that all communications of Alexandria with the south of Egypt were suddenly broken up by a most fanatical invasion, as was that of Omar, that the monophysite archbishop of Alexandria

would have thought of sending missionaries to Ethiopia, where nobody could then go except through the large army of the successor of Mahomet. Paradox is often attributed to the great author of the *Roman History*, but it must be doubted if he ever carried it so far, in any part of his celebrated works.

But another very important consideration militates against this incredible assertion : It must be admitted by all that the Coptic Church does not now pretend, and has never, as far as known, pretended, to extend her jurisdiction south beyond Syene. At this moment there are, it is true, a few Copts scattered over Sennaar, owing to the liberal government of the Khedive ; and it is known that Sir Samuel Baker buried one of his Englishmen on his return in the Coptic *cemetery* of Berber. But it is only lately that this could take place, and there is not properly, in that distant country, any organized Coptic Church, with bishops, priests, and monks, even at present. There is, in fact, no actual vestige of Christianity in Nubia. Yet, in case this country had been converted by the Copts of Egypt after the Moslem invasion, there can be no doubt that it would, on this account, have become the most precious gem of their Christian crown ; and that in all their subsequent misfortunes, when they were groaning under the most oppressive yoke, they would never have forgotten this "child of sorrow," this "Benjamin of the hour of death." But in all the ritual prayers of the Monophysite Church of Alexandria, preserved to our day, and used in her present liturgy, you will not find a single word addressed to God in behalf of Nubia ; although the Ethiopia of Axum and the Abuna of the Abyssinians are not forgotten. Nay, the records of the Coptic Church would certainly have preserved the names of the blessed men who would have conquered to Christ all the upper basin of the Nile, and planted the cross so near to the "unapproachable equator." Not only this is not the case ; but in all the subsequent history of the Coptic Church, when its members were yet numbered by millions, and its bishops and monks by hundreds and thousands, we never hear of any intercommunication between both parts of the country ; and of the Nubian bishops or priests meeting with those of their northern brethren for the purposes of consultation or edification. Yet it is, according to Niebuhr, at the very time when all intercourse between north and south was broken up, that Nubia became thoroughly Christian !

Letronne, much cooler in his speculations than the great Niebuhr,

is, on the contrary, afraid, and justly so, of being considered as rash in placing the total submission of Nubia to Christianity so late as the reign of Justinian ; and he takes consequently good care to say that he assigns that epoch as the one in which Christianity had entirely abolished polytheism, and he repeats again and again that there might have been numerous Christians in Nubia long before ; and he tries to save his reputation as an exact literary critic, in case other inscriptions might be found later on, opposed, on the very face of them, to his peculiar opinion and system, which, however, can very well be admitted, with its limitations and qualifications.

With him, even, it is an opinion and a system; nothing else. He was certainly a great Hellenist scholar, and he found in the Greek inscriptions of Nubia a remarkable occasion of proving his scholarship, and his profound knowledge of Greek literature in all ages and countries. He could easily distinguish Greek expressions used in the third, the fourth, the tenth centuries of our era, from those of the golden age of Pericles. He could discriminate between the various dialects spoken at different times in the most barbarous districts of Asia Minor, in the African colony of Cyrene, in the interior cities of Syria, etc., etc. The Nubian inscriptions published by Gau, by Salt, and others, furnished him a splendid opportunity of displaying his peculiar talent—and it was certainly a great talent, which very few men in Europe possessed at the time. All his labors, however, on the introduction of Christianity in Nubia, ended in paradox ; and nobody could prove it better than he did himself. For Niebuhr, having commented only on a very limited number of the inscriptions published by Gau, Letronne consented to do the same on some others which the German critic had neglected to explain ; and he prefaced his short work by a few general considerations “on the barbarous Greek spoken or written in various countries, at different times ;” and in these prefatory remarks he completely reduced to nought all the pretended proofs given in his three *Mémoires*, “that Nubia became thoroughly Christian only under Justinian.” A few words of discussion are required on the subject ; they will not detain us long.

The reasons of the French *savant*, for assigning such a late epoch to this memorable event, were chiefly derived from philology and architecture. He found in the Greek Christian inscriptions many words or phrases which he pretended belonged to the Byzantine period, and he declared that the Nubian Christian ruins were, like-

wise, Byzantine. Yet he was obliged to confess, that with respect to language, at least, many of the expressions he looked upon as appertaining to the Lower Empire, were also found in authors of a much purer age, and he called them *Hellenistic*, a term which he did not explain more exactly than by quoting several Greek authors of the beginning of our era, and among them Plutarch was included. A few of those expressions moreover, he confessed, could be found in *Attic* authors. But he said there were some of them which belonged evidently to a much later age, and are found chiefly in modern Greek, as *νηπόρ* for *βδωρ*. In this last supposition we would be carried down to an epoch much later than that of Justinian. But whatever may have been the ingenuity of Letronne, to prove by those inscriptions the opinion already often referred to, he reduced to nought all this linguistic labor, by the short and very interesting introduction he prefaced to his commentary, on several inscriptions published by Gau. Here he advocated a much more reasonable solution of the difficulty, and showed that, whenever a foreign language is extensively introduced in any country, and left to the control of the people—as Greek was in Ethiopia—this language is completely deformed, and soon becomes a *jargon*, passing gradually, perhaps, into a more modern tongue. He proved abundantly, that most European languages have been formed by such a process of disintegration at first, and of reconstruction afterward; and he concluded that no one can be surprised that such seems to be the case, with respect to Christian epigraphy in Nubia.

In this, in our opinion, he was most successful; but it is evident that this could have happened in Nubia and Ethiopia, in the first three centuries of Christianity, as well as in the fifth and sixth; and that, consequently, all the erudition displayed in his *Matériaux pour l'Histoire de l'introduction du Christianisme en Nubie* was a mental labor completely lost, and no conclusion could be reached by such a process, with regard to the precise epoch of this introduction. These few words must suffice for this first kind of proofs given by Letronne in support of his opinion.

As to the style of architecture adopted by the builders of the Nubian churches, monasteries, and houses, the French author simply says that it is evidently Byzantine; but his assertion can very well be controverted. The comparatively short time we had to spend in looking at the splendid engravings of Gau, and in reading the commentaries of Niebuhr and of Letronne on them, did not allow us suf-

ficient leisure to read all his text, and we cannot say if he also calls these ruins Byzantine. Gau was an architect, and we would trust him more implicitly than Letronne on such a question. But it is hard to see how he could have considered as belonging to the Lower Empire, the Christian monuments he has himself engraved. Most of those we saw recall more to the mind the manner of construction adopted by the early Church in Rome, than anything deserving the name of Byzantine. This is evident to the mere tyro in art.

To be more precise in these remarks, there is a broad distinction to be made between the buildings erected entirely by Nubian Christians, and the *replâtrage*—to use a French word—to which they often confined their adaptation of old Egyptian edifices to their new worship. Both kinds of *antiquities* have to be considered apart for a moment. The first is evidently the one which should guide the modern archaeologist in deciding the age of the monuments. In the large Atlas of Caillaud, so few drawings of Christian buildings are given, and these are so poorly selected, that an enlightened opinion can scarcely be based on them. The French traveler, altogether engrossed by the more bulky and florid pagan structures, scarcely condescended to look on anything which had not a Pharaonic aspect. If Letronne formed his opinion of the style of these monuments from the specimens given in the *Voyage à Meroë*, he again lost his time, and his decision about their Byzantine character is not of much worth. But he certainly looked, at least, at the much more precious collection of Gau, and he must have seen several excellent views of old Ethiopian churches and monasteries. Although they are few in number, they are certainly striking in their appearance; and in looking at them we were vividly reminded, as to the exterior view, which is the only one reproduced, of the churches of St. Laurence and of St. Clement at Rome. No building of the Lower Empire, that we know, displays the Roman arch in its purity, as some of those Nubian structures do. Sometimes a long line of windows in an exterior Ethiopian wall, brings back to your recollection the tall arches of the old aqueducts, as they span, to this day, the wilderness around Rome. Occasionally the ground-plan alone, as given by Gau, transports you suddenly to the Rome of the Cæsars. There is nothing of the kind so striking as a plate reproducing the horizontal drawing of two churches and a house near Ibrim, in *Wadi-Nuba*, one degree south of the tropic. One of the churches had three aisles, the other, five. They look exactly, in the work of Gau, like

the ground-plan of Roman basilicas. The dimensions are not given, but the architectural idea is perfectly exact. As to particular arches, there is one, somewhere in the volume, which resembles more the middle one of the monument of Constantine at Rome than anything imagined by architects of the time of Justinian at Constantinople. But the Nubian house, mentioned above, whose plan is given between that of the two churches, is particularly striking. It is not, for once, a monastery, but the private dwelling of an Ethiopian of the period. We could imagine nothing looking more like the palatial house of a Roman patrician at that time. The *atrium* is not, perhaps, so prominent as it would have been at Rome, but the halls and rooms are perfectly alike ; and there is, besides, a staircase in one of the corners, spacious and well drawn, which supposes at least a floor above. This building alone, placed between two churches, would prove conclusively that the Ethiopian Christians of that age were civilized, and that they derived their arts from a purer source than that of Byzantium in the sixth century could furnish.

### 3. *Conclusions from monuments and inscriptions in Nubia.*

They, however, did not always erect new edifices from the foundation. Whenever they met with some old Egyptian temple of moderate dimensions, which they could adapt to the uses of a church, they did so ; and they thus came to adopt a kind of *replâtrage*, of a very peculiar nature. Yet this French word gives scarcely an idea of it, and may even create a wrong impression. Caillaud speaks of it, particularly in describing the old monuments of the island of Philae. There is one, it seems, there, which was turned into a church, and in which, he says, the old sculptures *in relief* were covered with a rough coating of mortar, on which were painted the figures of bishops and monks. He does not fail to remark that this clumsy and wretched gingerbread work, unable to stand the test of time, shells off, and allows a part at least of the substantial construction concealed beneath, to reappear. The reader is completely misinformed by such statements as these. First, it may be said simply that the *monkish replâtrage* was not, after all, so clumsy and wretched, since it has not yet disappeared after so many centuries ; it has only scaled off in a few places. A clear and short account of the way the thing was done by the monks, in all its circumstances, will correct whatever is unreliable in the narrative of the French

traveler. As there is no representation in his plates of the monument of Philæ just referred to, we are reduced to examine the work of Gau for the same object ; and fortunately a splendid specimen of this *replâtrage* is given in the "Planches 45." It reproduces an old Egyptian temple of Essaboua, as spelt by Gau—generally called Sebua, near Ibrim, and not far from Ipsambul. On the front represented in the plate there were originally five scenes sculptured in the stone of the primitive Egyptian monument, four on the contour, and a central one. Those of the periphery have been left exactly as they were, and are taken either from the history or the mythology of old Egypt. But that of the center has been subjected to a real *replâtrage*, and is occupied entirely by a large picture of St. Peter. The face, the dress, the look is the traditional Roman one. From his right hand, with which he holds a part of his robes, is likewise suspended a huge key—only one—and if you look only at him, and forget entirely the mythological surroundings, it is impossible not to imagine that this splendid portrait might have been taken away entire from some *arcosolium* of the catacombs, and inserted on the Egyptian monument, so as to fit perfectly the middle compartment. It is not intended to say that such a transfer took place in reality ; the object is merely to refer to the perfect sameness of style both at Rome and in Nubia. The inscription even : *Πετροῦ Αποστολοῦ*, might very well be supposed to have had the same Western origin, since it is well known that the Greek can be called the official language of the Roman Church in the primitive ages, and the suggestion of Caillaud, about the "wretched, clumsy, gingerbread work, unable to stand the test of time," cannot apply here, since this Christian antiquity seems from the plate to be as perfectly preserved as the remainder of the monument ; the only defect in it, in fact, is that the second omicron of *Αποστολοῦ* has, for some reason or other, disappeared and left a small gap in the inscription.

But there is a peculiarity in this remarkable relic of antiquity which requires a word of comment. The strange neglect of the Nubian Christians of those times in not erasing from an edifice which they dedicated to the worship of the true God every mark of paganism, shall directly occupy a moment of our attention ; but in this case there is, it may be said, a real adaptation of one at least of the mythological scenes to the great figure of the Prince of Apostles. In the lower compartment of this curious *façade* are represented several Egyptian priests carrying on their shoulders a long boat, all

manned and ready to be launched. On it stands a kind of tabernacle in which Amun appears, sitting on a couch, and before him there is an altar with gifts. Was this idolatrous sculptured scene left there, when the pagan temple became a Christian church, on account of this representation of a ship? and did the Christians of that age find in it an allusion to the "bark of Peter"? No one can say. Diodorus,\* besides several other ancient writers, speaks of this custom among the old Egyptians and Ethiopians. "The ship," says Heeren, "in the great temples seems to have been very magnificent. Sesostris presented one to the temple of Ammon at Thebes, made of cedar, the inside covered with silver, and the outside with gold. When the oracle was to be consulted, it was carried around by a body of priests in procession, and from certain movements either of the god or of the ship, the omens were gathered. . . . This ship is often represented both upon the Nubian and the Egyptian monuments, sometimes standing still, and sometimes carried in procession."

In the present state of our knowledge with regard to the introduction of Christianity in Ethiopia, it is impossible to determine what reasons had the first missionaries of the Gospel, in that wilderness, for allowing so many pagan emblems to remain on buildings dedicated to the new worship of the God of Christians. Perhaps the Egyptian mythology was already so completely forgotten in Nubia that there was no danger of the old superstitions reviving again at the sight of these sculptures. Perhaps, also, as has been just suggested, there was often a visible allusion to some fact or belief of Christianity, easily recalled to the mind of the new converts by the spectacle of the former pagan pomps. That the ship of Amun, carried in ancient times through the country from Meroë to Thebes, as an emblem of civilization, religion, and prophecy, should represent to the mind of Nubian Christians the bark of Peter, whose mission of Christian culture, truth, and holiness was to be forever universal and no more confined to Africa, can have nothing surprising, much less absurd, for those who know how thoroughly Catholic thought and even phraseology had then penetrated to the very heart of this desolate continent. The Greek inscriptions preserved on the pagan temple of Tehfah, formerly called Taphis, are all Christian; and although many of them can scarcely be read, owing to their state of deterioration, Gau was so struck by a list of virtues which he saw on it that

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\* I. 67, and ii. 199.

he has preserved forever this part of it, which Niebuhr did not try to comment upon, because the words alone are sufficiently eloquent. The modern European reads there that Africa then knew the meaning of such expressions as *πιστις*. *ελπις*. *αγαπη*. *δικαιωσυνη*. *ειρηνη*. *αληθεια*. *μακροθυμια*. *ευχρατεια*. Picture to yourself the Nubians of our day looking on those characters, which stand there still, and hearing the translation of them in their own actual language from some traveler acquainted with Greek! Could they even conceive the least idea of such words as *faith*, *charity*, *justice*, *peace*, *truth*, *perseverance*, and finally not *temperance*, as many would translate *ευχρατεια*, but in truth *moral strength*, the perfect control over all base passions, which is the real and adequate meaning of the word? At a time when the inhabitants of those dreary regions could understand such a language as this, there was indeed little danger for them of being brought back to idolatry by such trifling allurements as the representation of Amun or of Osiris. The great moral idea of the universal dominion of the bark of Peter, in whose hands they could at all times see the true emblem of the key of heaven, would remain forever engraved in their mind at the sight of the old ship of Amun, which their ancestors had believed to be the only means of diffusion of truth, culture, and prophecy, in its wanderings all along the Nile.

It is to be supposed that the reader can now judge of the artistic adaptation of the old Egyptian monuments to the performance of the Christian worship, as it was carried out by the first missionaries in Nubia. We must, however, still beg his indulgence for one more detail, which is not, in our opinion, deprived of importance, and, in fact, could not be passed over by any one desirous of obtaining a sufficiently plain idea of the evangelization of Africa. It will clear up a difficulty of which a word has already been said, and whose solution has been promised. This is the fact: An inscription has been found on a temple of the island of Philæ, giving the text of a treaty of peace between the Blemmyes and Maximinus, general sent against them by the Emperor Marcian. Marcian, the husband of Pulcheria, was certainly a very Christian prince; yet the general appointed by him to subdue the Blemmyes, after having gained over them a victory, negotiates a treaty of peace, signed in a temple of Isis, under the supervision of several members of the pagan priesthood, whose names, as co-signers of the important document, stand yet and can be read on the walls of the edifice. Letronne, who gives all

the details of the transaction in his *Mériaux*, etc., concludes that paganism was yet in full vigor at Philæ under one of the successors of Theodosius, who had decreed long before the abolition of polytheism and the closing of all pagan temples. Tillemont, it seems, had been previously staggered by this fact, and scarcely knew how to explain it. Understood as it is by many learned men, it would go to prove that Christianity did not obtain an exclusive superiority in Nubia, until late into the period of the Lower Empire. Letronne, in fact, thinks that the doctrines of the Gospel prevailed in this country only after the expedition of Narsès, a full century later than the one sent by Marcian against the Blemmyes. But all his apparent historical erudition on the subject, is only the effect of want of reflection, and of indulging in suppositions from which nothing can be concluded with regard to the introduction of Christianity in Ethiopia. To be convinced of it, it is proper to examine who were the Blemmyes, and whether their transactions with Maximinus in the island of Philæ, suppose, necessarily, that Egyptian polytheism flourished yet in that island, under Marcian.

The question, Who were the Blemmyes? is as intricate and perplexing as the other, Who were the Pelasgians? And, first, the opinion of Pliny, that they lived south of the Atlas, ought to be discarded, as no one else has ever placed them so far west in Africa. Pliny must have spoken here of some other tribe of a similar name, more barbarous yet, since he pretends that they had no head, and that their eyes and mouth were simply on their breast. No other ancient writer has fallen into such an evident error as this, and all place the Blemmyes in the east of Africa, along the Nile, or, at least, not far from it. Some authors say they lived on the western bank of the river, on the borders of what is now the sandy desert of Libya, which had not then progressed so far east; others pretend that they occupied the opposite side of the Nile, and speak of them as if their power extended as far as Axum in Abyssinia, or even reached the coast of the Red Sea. But the majority of old authors represent them as settled on both sides of the great river, and living, consequently, south of, and contiguous to the Upper Thebais. These last writers represent them as being always on the move, sometimes farther south, at other times farther north; but constantly at war either with Egypt in the north, or with Ethiopia in the south. It is certainly in these various positions that reliable history notices them under the Ptolemies and the Romans. It is there Probus

conquered them, and carried a great number of them to Rome to honor his triumph. It was there, likewise, that Diocletian made war on them, and left them to the tender mercy of the Ethiopian king, after having fortified the island of Philæ to keep the Thebais free from their attacks. It has just been mentioned that under Marcian, several centuries afterward, they were there yet, after having been so often beaten back. All authors agree that they remained pagan to the last; but all, likewise, admit that they had adopted the old Egyptian polytheism in place of the still more barbarous superstitions which they had, no doubt, brought primitively from the heart of the continent.

These details could not be known to Tillemont, but Letronne must have been acquainted with them. Niebuhr had already, before him, in commenting on the inscriptions of Gau, quoted many passages from Latin and Greek historians, on this restless and warlike nation. Decius had obliged them to keep quiet; at his death they invaded Egypt, and occupied even Ptolemais and Coptos, in the heart of the Thebais. Aurelian, before Probus, triumphed over them and over the Axumites.

The evident conclusion drawn from these facts, and others of a similar character, is that the Blemmyes were a nomad people, and had no clearly defined territory to dwell in. Letronne admits it; and it is generally the opinion of most modern writers. Consequently, the treaty of Maximinus with them, ratified in a temple of Isis at Philæ, and signed by several Egyptians, called *prophet* and *scribes*, is no proof whatever that open polytheism still existed on that island, and that the sway of Christianity over the country was not then exclusive. The Blemmyes on this occasion came so far north, only on a warlike excursion. Being near Philæ at the time of their defeat, this island was the natural place for the conclusion of a treaty of peace between them and the Byzantine general. He consented, or perhaps requested, that the document should be signed in a pagan temple, because the Blemmyes were worshipers of Isis, and would consider themselves more strictly bound by an oath made in such a place as this. As to the Egyptian *prophet* and *scribes*—their names are Egyptian, as Letronne remarks—there must have remained in the country men calling themselves by such titles as these, since there was undoubtedly a remembrance of idolatry; but the titles themselves do not necessarily indicate a ritual and sacrificial character, only a traditional and scientific one. From these very

natural suppositions it can be maintained that the fact of such a treaty as this does not afford any proof that the rites of the old Egyptian religion were openly performed at the time, but only that some men continued to bear titles which had a very different meaning in previous ages. Had Tillemont known the details that modern critics have discovered, he would have himself made remarks of the same nature, and could not have seen in the fact a real historical difficulty.

The frequent presence of the Blemmyes in the neighborhood of the first cataract offers a sufficient explanation—we grant it—of the longer persistence of idolatry near Syene and Philæ, and of the mixture of Christian and pagan inscriptions in that island and its neighborhood, whilst, on the contrary, all the Greek relics of epigraphy now in existence farther south, are Christian. This alone would authorize the opinion that Southern Nubia kept constantly pure her Christianity, whilst the paganism of the Blemmyes occasionally interfered in the country farther north.

And here precisely a most precious document, transcribed by Gau, throws, it can be said, a flood of light on this subject. It is the inscription of Silco, commented upon by both Niebuhr and Letronne, with such a different result, however, that the reader is naturally staggered and scarcely knows what conclusion to draw, in general, from the competency and ability of the best commentators and critics. It can be seen even to-day sculptured on a monument at Khalapsche—Talmis. Niebuhr was the first to give his explanation of it, and he is strongly of the opinion that it dates from the reign of Diocletian. "It cannot be," he says, "ascribed to the epoch of Justinian, since Silco calls himself emphatically the master of all Ethiopians, and in the sixth century, Axum was the capital of a powerful and independent Ethiopian kingdom." As, however, all inscriptions exaggerate the power of the prince whose greatness they celebrate, this proof of the date of the document cannot be considered as conclusive. But the chief object of Niebuhr is to make of Silco a powerful pagan king of Nubia, and in this he is altogether opposed by Letronne. Both admit that the monument commemorates a great victory of Silco against the Blemmyes, and of this there can be no doubt. But the pretended proof that Silco was pagan, is merely the word ὁ Θεός, which Niebuhr translates by the god, and the title of son of Mars, which the German *savant* thinks Silco ascribes to himself.

Letronne, who wrote after Niebuhr, has evidently the advantage. He proves that the expression ὁ Θεός cannot have any other meaning than the Supreme God, and that consequently the Ethiopian king was monotheist; besides, the words ταὶ εἰδωλα αὐτῶν, which are used in the inscription to express the gods of the Blemmyes, are evidently taken in the sense of the Old and New Testaments, and suppose that the writer was a Christian. This being admitted—and of its truth there can scarcely be any question—the country must have been altogether Christian, since the king, in extolling the unity of his God, and opposing evidently to it the vanity of the idols of the enemy, speaks in the name of the State, and his subjects could not, in that respect, be in antagonism to him. Finally, Letronne proves conclusively that the title of *son of Mars*, which Niebuhr says the king takes in the inscription, is only a huge mistake, which a very small share of attention would have corrected.

This short digression would be of extreme interest, if the exact date of the monument could be ascertained. Unfortunately this cannot be. The time of Diocletian, assigned by Niebuhr, is too early, and, as was just seen, cannot be said to be proved. The reign of Justinian, adopted by Letronne, is merely based on the style, which is nearly that of the Septuagint, with some less correct and pure expressions. The reasons detailed previously maintain here all their force, and the only legitimate induction is, that nothing is certainly known of the time of Silco. The only probable conjecture—it is nothing more—is that the country was no more governed by a queen, and that the long-enduring dynasty of the female Candakes was at an end. This is not the place to enter into such an intricate question as this; and even could it be determined, the position of Silco, in the line of the subsequent kings of Ethiopia, would not be ascertained. According to Niebuhr, who follows Renaudot, the last Christian king of Nubia was Basil, who lived toward 1080. In his time, the conquest of the country by the Moslem had been carried so far that the bishops were often obliged to contribute to the erection of Mahometan mosques. "It is not, therefore, surprising," says Niebuhr, "that in the time of King Roger II., under whose auspices was composed the excellent work on geography attributed to Eddrisi Scerife, the Christian religion, abolished entirely among other Nubians, subsisted only in very few tribes which finally embraced Islamism." These words cannot but excite the admiration of every intelligent man who reads them, when he reflects that an

African people of the race of Cush, surrounded on every side by Semitic Mahometans, fought for the religion of Christ during nearly five hundred years, and lost it only after all their political rulers and ecclesiastical guides had disappeared. Abyssinia was still more successful against the same enemies, since they could preserve both, although separated from Europe, and altogether sundered from the center of unity.

But if the exact epoch of the introduction of Christianity in Western Ethiopia cannot now be ascertained, which is the most probable conjecture?

If the apostleship of St. Matthew in that country could be positively proved, we would have other reasons to believe that the preaching of the religion of Christ along the Upper Nile was contemporaneous with the first messengers of the Gospel, as the Nubian Church would have had from the beginning a character of its own impressed on it by its first apostle. Everything tends to prove, on the contrary, that the Gospel's light reached the very center of Africa gradually, yet rapidly, from Egypt; and that the monks of the Upper Thebais were the first missionaries of that country as far south as Khartoum. In all the Christian ruins which yet exist along the great river, there is perfect homogeneity in every respect. It was a monastic Church, and its language was Greek. This tongue had been so far adopted that even the secular or civil inscriptions sculptured under the authority of the rulers of the country, and without any sacerdotal concurrence, were invariably Greek. As to the style of the architecture, and the minor details still visible in what remains after so many ages, there is no difference whatever between the Christian relics of Philæ and those of the neighborhood of Naga, south of the actual Khartoum, by the fifteenth degree of latitude. Everything evidently came from the Tabennite monasteries, probably not very long after Pachomius and Theodore. During the life of these two great men, large monastic institutions had been established firmly and thickly all over the Thebais and the frontier-line of Nubia. The short description given previously must have convinced the reader that the whole of that part of Egypt became then Christian. Can we suppose that from so many centers of piety nothing should have irradiated toward the south? The presence of the pagan Blemmyes might have been an obstacle. But in all the documents published by the Bollandists on those establishments no mention is ever made of them, except once, when they speak of the

Blemmyes dwelling in the east, in the direction of Axum. The only reason of this silence which can be given or supposed is that at the time when those monasteries flourished the savage tribes had been driven farther away. The agreement entered into between Diocletian and the Ethiopians a short time before, by which, according to Procopius, quoted by Niebuhr, these people took the engagement "to leave their establishment around the nearest oasis, and take up their quarters on the Nile, in order to exterminate or drive away the Blemmyes ; receiving in return the high domain over the country as far as seven days' march toward the south, besides an annuity granted them for the support of troops in order to further protect Egypt ;" this agreement may have for a long time secured the peace of the frontiers of Nubia, and done away with the only obstacle which might have otherwise opposed the missionary labors of the monks of Tabennæ.

These are merely conjectures, it is true, but they are based on positive historical facts admitted by Niebuhr. In this case, nothing is more simple than the gradual spread of Christianity from the time of Constantine, when it is known that the monasteries of the Upper Thebais were in full vigor. They had indeed been very prosperous as early as the time of Diocletian, at least with respect to the Thebais, which furnished numerous victims to the Christian martyrology.

And since the occasion has not yet offered itself of speaking of that early age of the Church in Egypt and Nubia, a word on it will not be unacceptable, chiefly for the reason that it will intimately connect the Ethiopian Church with that of Egypt, by showing in an irrefragable manner that "the age of martyrs" was common to both, and was, in fact, the only starting-point they both had for chronology. Letronne admits it, but his narrative of it is confused, as he probably disdained to consult Kircher on the subject. Yet he would have found in the *Prodromus Coptus* a clear statement of the case, which cannot be given here *in extenso*, and which, nevertheless, must be briefly mentioned. The whole of it is contained in a letter written in Arabic by the Melchite Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius, whom Scaliger had consulted on the subject. We give a short passage of it, from the Latin translation of Kircher :

" You have again inquired of the era of Martyrs, followed by the Copts ; what it was, and why so named. Know, therefore, that it begins from the nineteenth year of the impious Emperor Diocletian,

when there was an increase of persecution against the Christians, and he issued a decree for the destruction of the churches, and for putting to death those who refused to sacrifice to the idols. In consequence of this edict, one hundred and forty-four thousand Copts received the crown of martyrdom, and seven hundred (thousand ?) were driven into exile. From that time the Coptic era dates, which they call Era of Martyrs, on account of those whose blood was shed by Diocletian."

And the particular reason why this happened in Egypt and in Nubia, whilst everywhere else the era finally adopted by all Christian nations was the birth of Christ, is likewise given by Kircher, in details which we must omit, mentioning only the substance of his narrative. Diocletian, after subduing the rebellion of Egypt under Achillas, turned suddenly against the Egyptian Christians, and to crush them decreed, first, the burning of their sacred books ; secondly, their deprivation of the privilege of working their mines of precious metals ; thirdly, the substitution of the Roman calendar for the Egyptian, and the injunction of beginning their computation of time from the era of his reign. The two first prescriptions of the edict soon fell into disuse by the accession of Constantine ; the last remained, and was called in Egypt the era of Diocletian. The Christians adopted it by merely taking away the eighteen first years of the computation—namely, the first eighteen years of Diocletian—and considered it as an honor to begin their new era by the baptism of blood they had received at the beginning of his persecution.

Letronne proves, by several inscriptions on which he comments, that this also was the era adopted by the Nubians and Ethiopians as far as the ruins of Christian monuments can be found in the country ; and this is certainly a most striking proof that Ethiopia must be entirely connected with Egypt, with respect to the introduction of Christianity in the country, though later on the connection ceased.

Africa, therefore, nearly as far as the center, belongs to Peter, as well as Alexandria, its capital ; and with justice was the full-length portrait of the Prince of Apostles, with the key of heaven, represented on the monuments along the Nile. The abundance of matter which we meet on our way, prevents us from indulging in reflections naturally suggested by such remarkable discoveries. Yet before concluding what regards Western Ethiopia, a word can scarcely be omitted with regard to the extent and importance of this early conquest of

the religion of Christ, and to the fulfillment of the prophecies committed upon in a previous chapter.

It has already been remarked that the ruins of Christian monuments along the Nile are found as far up the river as the remains of Egyptian antiquities can be met with ; and this comprises not only Nubia proper, but, south of it, the old Empire of Meroë, on the limits of the actual Soudan, so lately annexed again to Egypt by the armies of the Khedive. Yet a question arises here, Where was Meroë ? How far have travelers to go before they can find its ruins ? Wherever antiquity stares us in the face doubts arise, and the most learned men are divided in opinion ; yet the real position of Meroë is most important to ascertain. It was generally said by ancient writers to be situated in a large island ; and the windings of the Nile from the nineteenth to the twentieth degrees of latitude forming a vast peninsula, with a modern town by the name of *Merawe* on a remarkable point of its periphery, many modern writers placed the ancient Meroë in that position. Admitting it to be the true one, Christianity, in the most primitive ages, would have undoubtedly penetrated very far into the interior of Africa. But the travels of Gau and Caillaud produced a remarkable change of opinion. When both gentlemen, having advanced beyond Merawe as far as the fifteenth degree, met with ruins far more imposing and numerous than all the other monuments of Northern Nubia, they asked themselves if the geographical position of the ancient Meroë had not been mistaken by previous historians and geographers ; and Caillaud in particular pronounced himself in favor of placing it at Mereh, south of Shendi, and a few miles north of Khartoum. Heeren warmly adopted this opinion, and he discussed with great erudition the question of "the Island of Meroë." He proved that Agatharchides, Strabo, and Pliny believed it to be formed, not by the windings of the river itself, but by the southern connection of the tributaries of the Astaboras and the Nile, which at the rainy season interlock and form a real island. Thus the island of Meroë was removed three or four degrees farther south than it had been previously supposed to be. The main foundation of this opinion lies in the copiousness and richness of the ruins still preserved near Hassour, Naga, Gerri, Messourah, etc., all in the neighborhood, or south of Shendi.

Many Egyptologists, it is true, have demurred, and insist yet on placing ancient Meroë near Napata, by the nineteenth degree of lati-

tude. The question which is the actual subject of our inquiry is scarcely interested in this conflict of opinion, since, in any case, even should Meroë have been yet farther north, Christian ruins are met with as far as Khartoum, and thus the extension of Christianity so far is proved. Yet, for the sake of truth alone, and judging only from the materials and the plates under our eyes, we could not hesitate to side with Caillaud and Heeren. The chief reason assigned by the Egyptologists arrayed against this opinion, namely, that the Nubian ruins are very inferior to those of Egypt, that the farther we go into the interior of the continent the poorer they are, etc., seems to be contradicted by the engravings of Caillaud and Gan. It cannot be supposed that both travelers intended to deceive the public ; no one could for a moment imagine it ; yet it is sure that if in Egypt and the Thebais there are more huge pyramids, buildings more vast, and a closer agglomeration of colossal piles, in the farthest districts of Ethiopia, beyond the junction of the White and Blue Niles, or at least in its neighborhood, the artistic details as given in the plates of the travelers are as perfect as any in the country around Memphis and Thebes, whilst the number, size, and closeness of the monuments in the dreary regions of the Tacazze and the Nile, on the borders of the Soudan and the negro-country, are as astonishing and perhaps more marvelous than in the Thebais and the Delta. And were we to touch the question, more general yet, and more important, Did the culture of Ethiopia come from Egypt, or that of Egypt from Ethiopia, the sight of what remains yet in this last country would certainly make us hesitate, or even lean toward the last alternative.

It is certain that the civilization of Meroë was considered by all ancient writers as anterior to that of Thebes. It is sure that the remains of architecture yet in existence do not belie that old opinion. The greatness, the power, the wide-spread sway of the Cushite race, so different from the Egyptian nation, is again asserted with a most powerful array of learned quotations, by such men as Geo. Rawlinson. In the face of all this there is nothing improbable and unscientific in the opinion which the majority of Egyptologists seem to have momentarily rejected.

A last word on the subject now under consideration is derived from the mournful retrospect which the memory of the introduction of Christianity in Nubia naturally brings back. The impulse was given, the religion of Christ was sweeping along southward in the continent of Africa, the region of the great lakes whence the Nile derives its

source was going to be reached, when the Moslem scimiter suddenly stopped the movement, and retarded for more than a thousand years the peaceful conquests of the Gospel in those regions given over henceforth to superstition and barbarism. What has been the result of the preponderance of Mahometanism in that country during the last twelve hundred years ? It is visibly portrayed in the travels of the ardent explorers of the sources of the Nile. A few Arab merchants, starting from Zanzibar in the east, with all the greed of the race of Ismael, sponge away to the last drop whatever is precious in the vast and populous countries traversed by Stanley. A number of Turks, either from birth or education, coming down from Cairo, with the overbearing pride and detestable lust of the Osmanlis, sweep over the whole valley of the great river, to import into Europe or Asia armies of slaves taken in those frightful expeditions described by Sir Samuel Baker. The natives meanwhile, decimated on all sides, offer to the saddened reader all the signs of the lowest degradation. It is the only extensive spot on earth where millions of human beings have not the first notions of God nor of his law. No temples, no worship, no prayers are ever seen or heard in those vast regions, except as coming from the oppressors of the country, who pretend to worship Allah, but take good care not to make Mussulmans of the natives ; as they prefer, for their own selfish ends, that these should remain in their degraded condition. Who has not shuddered in reading *Ismaillia*, at the description of those three thousand cannibal Makkarikas sweeping over the Koshi country, at the instigation of Ali Emmeen, a faithful Turk certainly, as well as Aboo Saood, his superior ? Who could restrain his indignation when he sees the three thousand savages "devouring the children" of a large territory, because they had been deceived by Ali, and found that Sir Samuel Baker, then at Fatiko, had no more any herds on which they could satisfy their hunger ? This is the state to which the natives of Africa have been reduced by the introduction of Islamism.

In less than a century, for certain, down from the sixth, the Christian religion would have reached Gondokoro, and soon after the wild territory of the Makkarikas. Thus the ancestors of this people would have known the God of the Christians, and with him the long list of virtues engraved yet at this hour on the monument of Assaboua, north of them, namely, faith, hope, love, justice, perseverance or steadiness, and finally, temperance or self-control. Compare what Mahometanism has done in the interior of Africa with what Chris-

tianity did with our ancestors, the Germans, Scandinavians, and Celts, nearly as uncouth at first as the Makkarakas are now. This she was prevented from doing among the descendants of Cush or Misr ; but she would have surely finished the task she had so gloriously begun among them, had not her zeal been opposed by the brutal force of the sword, had not the fanaticism of the soldiers of Mahomet prevented, for a time, the fulfillment of the old prophecies concerning Ethiopia.

For so far, all the conquests of the Church we have chronicled over Syria, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Egypt, and Ethiopia, were a strict, although not yet perfect accomplishment of the oracles of the Old Testament, recorded in a previous chapter. The objection, however, is sternly urged against this fulfillment: that if these oracles came from God, God was powerful enough to overcome all obstacles, and fulfill all he had promised. The answer to this must be given, at least briefly and inadequately.

#### 4. *How far the old Prophecies have been accomplished by all these events.*

First, if we examine attentively what had been announced by the ancient Jewish seers, and compare it to the rapid events we are now recording, it will not be rash to conclude that God evidently fulfilled by the apostles what he had clearly promised by the prophets. The divine power alone could have abolished, in so short a time, idolatry, so deeply rooted in all those countries. The divine power alone could establish one religion among so many discordant tribes and nations, differing so thoroughly in belief and worship. The downfall of so many altars, where impious and cruel sacrifices of every kind were everywhere offered, to be replaced by one single altar, with one single unbloody sacrifice—a *downfall* predicted so clearly, and accomplished so thoroughly over so large a surface of the globe—could not be the work of any one but of God. Whoever denies this, denies the clearest dictate of reason. It is useless, for the support of a different opinion, to go on laboriously through all the small facts recorded in excellent, indifferent, or bad books, which give, or pretend to give, the history of the first introduction of Christianity. The believer in revelation knows, as well as the worst unbeliever, that God used human instruments for his purpose. The history of those facts, consequently, has for him a

worldly side, where even human passions have often their play. The only fault that can be found against the writer or the thinker, is when he attributes the whole result only to the combination of these exterior agencies. We maintain, that all this little machinery was perfectly incapable of producing the mighty revolution included in the two words, "abolition of idolatry," and "establishment of Christianity." Can a man of a sane mind imagine that, because Mark, a disciple of Peter, went first to the Thebais, and then to Alexandria, and brought with him the gospel that bears his name, and preached it to the Therapeutes, nothing is so easy of comprehension as the destruction of Egyptian polytheism, and the establishment along the Nile of an exclusive Christianity? Who can pretend that, because Paul—supposing his natural talent much greater still than it really was—traveled through Asia Minor, Greece, Italy and other places, stopping here and there, and making a few converts in many cities, where suddenly small Christian communities began to appear, nothing is more natural than the subsequent growth of those communities, and the final absorption into them of the whole Greek and Latin-speaking world?

Let the most talented, erudite, and critical writer show that in such a place as Alexandria, for instance, the successive history of its patriarchs, the springing up, one after another, of its various churches and congregations, the whole complexity of its final church organization, was—each of them—the result of the particular agency of this or that person, he will be as completely unable to account for the whole as if no such details could ever be furnished to the student; because every one knows that God in all his moral works uses human instruments, whether he needs them or not, as in his physical works he uses secondary laws, whether or not they are necessary to him; yet in both cases the work is his. As it would be perfectly absurd in any geologist to pretend that because the various strata of the globe follow each other in a certain order, and show yet in the remains they contain the agency of secondary causes, God had nothing to do with creation, and everything in the world can be at all explained without his designing mind or supreme controlling power; so in the religious order it is as irrational to suppose that the sublime framework of Christianity was only the result of a mere moral mechanism, and the natural and simple culminating point of an immense number of irregular forces called *men*, whether holy or not. Nay, it is more difficult to suppose the establishment of Christianity without the

action of God, than the framing of the world without his power. The human mind can conceive that in a case, involving only physical objects, they can be left to their own evolution ; provided they are governed by a law emanating originally from God. This can be conceived, although we do not share individually in this now almost universal supposition ; and we attribute a much greater directness to the divine action over the physical universe even. But in the moral and religious order the case is much stronger still ; because it is not then the case of a mere material effect to be produced. An immense number of free agents, endowed with an activity of their own, unfortunately able at all times to oppose the will of God by the sternness of their own, are there distributed unequally in that limitless spiritual world. All, not only together and in a mass, but individually even, and taken piecemeal, are to be previously conquered before the intended effect is produced. Who but God can act upon those souls to be *converted*, as the Word has it, that is, to be changed morally, to be disposed, like Clovis, "to burn what they had adored, and to adore what they had burned" ? Who but God can even touch those immaterial spirits and act upon them by a kind of holy contact ? The eloquent earnestness of Paul, of Peter, of Mark, considered only as men, cannot have any adequacy to the moral change involved in the word, *conversion*. The great Apostle of the Gentiles knew it well when he exclaimed : "I have planted, Apollo has watered, but God has given the increase."\* These few phrases must suffice for the moment.

Secondly, the temporary limitation imposed to the will of God by the opposing will of man, is not a proof of the non-fulfillment of the prophecies ; and, although the Catholicity of the Church has not yet reached a point covering entirely all the utterances of the oracle, yet it was a real Catholicity at the early age we now consider. This second consideration will sufficiently explain what is meant by Catholicity, and show, likewise, the meaning of the ancient oracles about the future universal Church.

There was, no doubt, in all countries, a limitation to the will of God—if such very inexact expressions are allowable—imposed by the passions of men, and destined to last a longer or shorter period of time, so as to be, in fact, only temporary. This limitation, as it is here called, proceeded, either from the stubborn resistance of pagan-

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\* I. Cor. iii. 6.

ism, or too soon, alas, from the springing up of heresies among the new believers. In both cases, the fullness of redemption, as it was intended by a most merciful God, could not be carried out. Christ had shed his blood for all ; but owing to the free will of man, many would refuse to accept the boon. As of individuals, so of nations this would become true. For ages, surely, perhaps until the end, the call of God to men to enter the fold of his Son, would remain unheeded by a great number. Would this prevent the Church from being really Catholic ?

One thing is certain, that as early as the second century, when Christians were so near the apostles, who must have understood the sense of prophecy, the Church was already called Catholic, to the exclusion, not only of infidels, but of heretics likewise, and all the Fathers declared that the prophecies had been fulfilled. Yet, at the time, there remained a great number of polytheists—in many districts of the Roman world, nearly one-half the population—and the Gnostic errors were spreading, far and wide, among Christians. Every one knows the long array of sects against which Irenæus wrote ; still, all the Fathers called the Church Catholic, and announced that the prophecies uttered long before on the subject were already accomplished. Tertullian, in particular, not yet fallen from the faith, penned, in his book, *Adversus Judæos*, that eloquent page on the universality of the Spouse of Christ, which it will be, later on, our duty to reproduce and comment upon.

Another thing is likewise certain, that at the very moment these declarations were made—the second century—the obstacles against the diffusion of Christianity were increasing instead of diminishing ; the philosophers were becoming more ardent in their opposition ; the new heretics increased the perils of the Church by their numerous books and their open denunciations ; the pagans were more actuated than ever by the most furious hatred ; and the State was preparing to exert all its power against what it called superstition and atheism.

Catholicity can, consequently, really exist before the world is subdued ; nay, when the world is yet an enemy, and most powerful to destroy. It is a fact that the Fathers of the Church announced its universality as already in existence, and the former prophecies as evidently accomplished, merely because it had been founded everywhere, and there were congregations of Christians in the whole world as they knew it. We must not, however, imagine that they understood the Church as composed of disconnected atoms, and formed

by the mere agglomeration of distinct communities bound together only by the name of Christ. This is the Protestant meaning of the word Catholic. They knew it was a body, because Christ had promised it would be so ; they were convinced of its unity, resulting from a common faith, common sacraments, and a universally acknowledged head and hierarchy, having a really divine origin. These were its exterior bonds, sure signs of the interior life it enjoyed—a life indeed divine, since it was produced by the indwelling of Christ and the Holy Ghost. Hence they could distinguish heresy from truth, although error boasted of possessing the Scriptures. This possession, they averred, was not sufficient. The sacred books, they said, could be only lawfully used and authoritatively explained by the Church, whose pastors, occupying the sees founded by the apostles, could show their legitimate descent from those to whom Christ had intrusted the deposit of the faith and the duty of teaching. To the See of Peter they chiefly referred, as St. Irenæus said : “On account of its more powerful principality.” Many other texts pointing to this, even in the first ages of the Church, are quoted by theologians, and show the universal opinion already existing, and grounded on several most clear words of our Lord to Peter.

This is briefly the idea of the Catholic Church as understood by the Fathers ; but the subject, under actual consideration, limits the discussion to its universality, and in this view of the subject, the precise meaning of it is reached in an unmistakable manner.

There would be, in fact, absurdity in interpreting differently the ancient oracles. Many passages contained in them, chiefly in Isaias, announced openly and clearly that the Jews would refuse to enter the Church, and that few among them would avail themselves of the universally offered salvation. The Gentiles, it is true, were to be called in their place, and it was announced that these, in general, were destined to accept eagerly the boon ; but it was said nowhere that this would happen to all of them to a man. Many texts, on the contrary, could be adduced to prove that the universal Church resulting from the call addressed to the nations, would have to rely forever on the help of God for its continuance and increase ; would consequently forever meet with opposition. In the most brilliant descriptions of Isaias even, this occasionally breaks through the rays of light, and spreads a kind of gloom over the delightful picture. But Christ, at least, spoke openly ; and in promising that “by his elevation on the cross he would bring *all things* to himself,” he qual-

ified this general assertion by the most unequivocal announcement, that, as he had been persecuted, his Church likewise would be ; only he promised his apostles that he would support them, preserve them, and in the end make them triumph over their enemies : "Do not fear ; I have conquered the world." The full victory is promised only for the end. No one knows when this will be. As to its duration, namely, as to the period of time during which the exclusive reign of Christ will continue on earth, everybody is aware that the Revelation of St. John has given rise to several opinions ; some of them authoritatively condemned, like the gross millenarianism of many early heretics ; others left to the choice of all, either to adopt or reject them, since the voice of the true teacher has never yet pronounced.

But as long as the present state of trial continues, the Church nevertheless deserves to be called Catholic, and is the only body on earth that has ever justly claimed such a title as this. The reader, however, will have better occasion to be persuaded of it, as the narrative progresses ; and at its termination the conviction will be, we hope, complete.

Before, however, concluding these reflections, a remark is naturally suggested by the various races of men hitherto passed in review. Most of the first considered in a previous chapter, belonged to the Semitic stock ; the last, just enumerated, to the Hamitic family of nations. The call of Christ and of his apostles was addressed in fact to all the branches of mankind ; and it was to be accepted at least by some members of them all ; otherwise the Church could not be called Catholic. The assertion, therefore, of modern thinkers that Christianity is adapted only to the Japhetic or Aryan race is contradicted by the very first pages of its annals. We shall soon have still better proofs of their error ; and the short sketch, to which we now turn, of the introduction of the religion of Christ in Eastern Ethiopia or Abyssinia, cannot fail to strike the reader. It is here a permanent conquest, at least of the main tenets of Christianity, among an important branch of the Cushite race, perfectly identical with the Western Ethiopians or Nubians, consequently, of the real African stock.

##### 5. *The Ethiopia of Axum.*

Niebuhr remarks in his notes on the inscriptions published by Gau, that "the kingdom of Meroë, anterior to the Egyptian era, subsisted

yet under Ptolemy Philadelphus ; but from the time of Nero it was so completely extinct that the capital itself had become a wilderness. Then Axum began." The celebrated German historian makes here evidently a distinction between the "kingdom of Meroë" and the country ruled over by the Nubian kings, since he had stated previously that "the last Christian sovereign of Nubia mentioned in history is Basil, who reigned toward 1080." We are not aware that this distinction has been made by any other writer. But this subject has no claim on us for discussion. The only thing of some interest in the present investigation, is that the kingdom of Axum, in Eastern Ethiopia, began to be known in history only when that of Meroë, in the west, was either on the wane, or already extinct. In the short discussion which now opens before us, we have not to speak consequently of the conversion of a very old State, "anterior to the Egyptian era," as Niebuhr says of the previous one, that is, more ancient than the Egyptian monarchy. This is a very remarkable phrase certainly, proving what Niebuhr thought of ancient Ethiopia. The kingdom of Axum was, on the contrary, altogether recent ; yet it belonged to the same race as that of Meroë, and cannot be supposed to have been in an altogether barbarous condition, as some writers imagine. Until lately, the history of the city of Axum and of the kingdom of which it was the capital was so little known, that the most divergent opinions on the subject prevailed. But recently the new Bollandists, in the twelfth volume of October, have cleared up the question, with the help chiefly of Salt, Rüppell, A. d'Abbadie and others ; and although many details still remain obscure, the principal points at least can be considered as settled. •

According to the native Abyssinian annals the dynasty of their kings went back as far as the time of the Queen of Saba and Solomon ; and thus their State existed anteriorly to the reign of David's son. But all now agree that this is fabulous. Such a pretension as this originated most probably in the strong Jewish element which had previously passed to this country from the Homerite kingdom in Arabia, where it is now believed a great number of Jews had fled from Jerusalem at the time of Nabuchodonosor. A word may be said later on on this subject, in order to explain the Jewish customs which have certainly prevailed to a great degree in Eastern Ethiopia from a very early period. But this supposition of a dynasty in Africa, springing up from the posterity of Solomon and the Queen of Saba, is certainly a fable. Axum, at least, the capital, seems to be

much more recent. Ptolemy, the geographer, was, it seems, the first to state openly that Axum was the capital of the kingdom. Before him, it is true, the author of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, in the year 248, called the people *Axumites*; and Vopiscus, in 274, says that Aurelian carried after him in triumph a number of Axumites also. Later on, St. Athanasius, as well as the Emperor Constantius, give them the same name. This is all that is known of the origin of a city where even in our time a vast amount of ancient ruins astonish the beholder, whilst antiquaries do not yet agree as to those who built these monuments. The Greek taste prevails in the architecture, as well as the Greek language in the epigraphy. In our private opinion, if it is worth anything, the buildings were erected, and the inscriptions written during, or shortly after, the dynasty of the Ptolemies in Egypt. It is well known that several of those princes, not satisfied with the navigation of the Nile for reaching Western Ethiopia, established on the Red Sea regular lines of vessels to trade with Eastern Ethiopia, as well as with Arabia. They were in possession of several harbors on the Arabian Gulf, and they may very well have extended their power as far in the interior as Axum. It is more probable, however, that the Greek language and architecture penetrated in the country through the influence only of the numerous Greek colonies established on the Red Sea coast, without supposing a real subjection of the State to the Egyptian government under the Ptolemies. And what renders this last hypothesis almost certain is the fact that under Constantius, when the evangelization of the country took place, it was certainly governed by native princes, who used Greek artists for their buildings and inscriptions. If Eastern Ethiopia had been really subdued and occupied by the Ptolemies, it would certainly have been claimed and kept by the Romans who succeeded them. Yet not more than seventy years after a number of Axumites had appeared in the triumph of Aurelian in 274, Constantius wrote to a great Ethiopian prince of Axum, who had just raised, among other monuments, a large obelisk existing yet at this day, and covered with a long inscription containing a list of the numerous provinces he governed.

The name of that prince is called in Greek 'Αειζαρᾶς; but his subjects, according to modern archaeologists, named him *Ela San*. Σάζαρᾶς was in Greek the name of his brother, and the Bollandists do not give the Ethiopian translation of it. Constantius wrote to both of them, in 355, a letter, preserved by St. Athanasius, in his

*Apologia*, in order to induce them to send back to Alexandria Frumentius, who had been consecrated bishop of the Axumites by the true archbishop. The Arian emperor wished that the apostle of the Abyssinians should be inducted in the heresy of Arius by George, an intruder, whom he had placed on the metropolitan see of Egypt, after having driven away the true pastor. These particularities will be commented upon by and by, in order to prove that the Abyssinians had received at first the true faith, and been converted under the care and authority of a legitimate successor of St. Mark.

Here, however, the main object of attention is the personality of *Ela San*, or *'Aṣiṣarās*, first Christian king of the country. It is magnificently described in the inscription of which a word has just been said, and which calls for a more protracted consideration. It was first copied and brought to Europe by Lord Valentia in 1805. Five years later Salt transcribed it again, with more care and learning; and after him it has been commented upon by many critics, chiefly Bœckh, Sapeto, Vivien de St. Martin, and Silvestre de Sacy. *Ela San* alone is there called king of the Axumites; his brother Sazanas, although mentioned, is not placed on the footing of a ruler; but from the letter of Constantius it is to be presumed that he had been admitted to a share of the sovereignty. The obelisk had been raised, and the inscription sculptured, before the king and nation had embraced Christianity; since the prince is called not only "king of kings," but also "son of the god Mars." Consequently, it dates from an epoch anterior to the return of Frumentius to Africa with the episcopal character. The number of nations which then were subjected to the sway of the Ethiopian potentate is really wonderful, and supposes that the monarchy was not altogether recent, but had already subsisted a certain time at least, unless *Ela San* indeed had become at once a great conqueror. The names of several of those nations give rise to some exegetic difficulties, and the various editors of the inscription have labored earnestly to remove every obscurity and doubt. They may not have yet succeeded completely; still enough is positively known from the monument to strike the reader with the power of this African sovereign. He is called first king of the Axumites; and it is evidently from Axum that the power had originated, destined afterward to spread all around. The title of king of the Homerites or Himyarites, which follows directly after, shows that a large district of Arabia, on the other shore of the Red Sea, had already been subdued and annexed to Ethiopia. The in-

scription of Adulis, of which mention has been made, proves that in the sixth century the Homerite country belonged yet to the Axumite monarch. The country of *'Pæiðāv'*, which follows in the inscription, is very nearly proved to have belonged to Yemen in Arabia; but it is not altogether certain, and gives rise to difficulties, which, however, cannot exist for *Σαβαειτῶν*—the Saba country—so that it is certain that the power of the Ethiopian kings at that period, embraced a large part of Yemen or Arabia Felix. But in Africa, it was not confined to what was called the Axumite country. Vivien de St. Martin has proved beyond contradiction that the words in the inscription itself, *Bouyæiτῶν, καὶ τοῦ κασοῦ*, etc., refer to all the country stretching from Axum toward the Nile, including a large portion of Nubia, and not excepting what was called of old the kingdom of Meroë, or at least a great part of it. So that, on another monument, according to the Bollandists, the whole country was called *Æthiopia Africano-Meroetica*. It is impossible not to be struck with the importance of this addition to the spiritual dominion of the Church, and not to feel an interest in the surprising manner with which this annexation to the kingdom of Christ took place, chiefly considering that this vast country was altogether out of the Roman dominion.

The epoch of the conversion of this powerful people does not, it is true, go back to the time of the apostles; and on this account it would seem at first that it is not comprised in the scope intended from the beginning in these pages. But when it is considered that it became a Christian conquest under Athanasius; that it was, on this account, only an extension of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, and followed directly from the labors of Mark, the disciple and representative of Peter, it becomes evident that it cannot be excluded from these considerations on Catholicity, and that a short account of it, at least, is proper, and not out of place.

That there were Christians in the country before Frumentius conquered it entirely for God and his Church, cannot be denied. A number of Hellenic colonies were then established on both shores of the Red Sea, and the great majority of Greeks were then Christian. Many of them undoubtedly had settled in the interior of the country, where they had introduced the Greek language, art, and customs. The rulers, however, and the Ethiopian nation in general remained pagan. The name of *Son of Mars*, given in the inscription to Ela San, had been most probably inscribed by the hands

of Greek artisans, and this alone would prove that paganism was the religion of the country, although many worshipers of Christ might be found in it in the service of an idolatrous sovereign.

It is well known that at the time, and during several centuries previous, the trade of Asia and Africa was mainly in the hands of Greek merchants. Thus it had been during the whole dynasty of the Ptolemies, and thus it continued to be under the Romans. Alexandria was the great emporium where the chief commodities of the East and West were exchanged, and from that city started the ships or caravans which traded with the Orient as far as India and China on the one side, and with all the harbors of Western Europe on the other. This was, in the designs of divine Providence, the occasion of the evangelization of Ethiopia, as well as of many other countries.

#### 6. *History of Frumentius or Salama.*

A Greek philosopher of the name of Metrodoros had traveled for his own pleasure and instruction, as far as India or the country we now call Hindostan. For a long time the learned world thought that this voyage of Metrodoros, as well as that of Meropios, who followed him, did not extend farther than Ethiopia, and that, whenever writers of that age speak of India, they mean only the western shore of the Red Sea as far as the Straits of Bab-el-mandeb. But the new Bollandists have abundantly proved in the life of St. Frumentius, lately published, that this country—Eastern Ethiopia—was not then the only country called India; this last expression also meant either Southern and Eastern Arabia, or Hindostan itself; in fact, the country generally occupied by the Cushite race. This remark is important, and we will have occasion to return to the subject with more details, when we speak of the early evangelization of Hindostan. Metrodoros had brought from this last country indeed, and from no other, diamonds and precious stones which he offered to Constantine, then ruling the Eastern world in the city he had built on the site of Byzantium. He stated, moreover, that what he had then with him was only a trifle, having been deprived of the greatest part of his treasure in traveling through Persia on his return; and some historians have pretended that this was the cause of the first war of Constantine with Sapor—an opinion now fully disproved.

But the story of Metrodoros became extensively known; and shortly after, Meropios, a Greek philosopher of Tyre, undertook a voyage to

India for the same purpose of curiosity and instruction. He took away with him two children, nearly related to him, whose education he intended to pursue during his travels. He reached India in safety, but of what he saw and learned in that distant country nothing has come down to us. On his return, as the ship on which he took passage had to stop at one of the harbors on the Red Sea, he was massacred with all the crew by the people of the neighborhood; only the two children, who were at the time on the shore, reading under a tree, were kept alive and brought to the king of Axum.

The children's names were Frumentius and Ædesius, and it is from Ædesius himself that Rufinus of Aquileia heard the story, at a later epoch, when the brother of Frumentius returned to Tyre, where he was ordained a priest. Unfortunately, several details were misunderstood by Rufinus, or not clearly explained by Ædesius, who, being very young when he first left his country, might well have imagined that Ethiopia, where his guardian was killed, belonged to the same Indian country through which he had been previously traveling. The consequence of this misunderstanding was that the presbyter of Aquileia became convinced that Frumentius had been the first apostle of India proper, to the exclusion of St. Thomas himself, and thus the opinion spread even in modern times that Ethiopia was really the country which the writers of that epoch called India. But the Bollandists have, by this time, cleared away all the difficulties on the subject; and it is now perfectly certain that Meropios had really visited Hindostan with the two children under his charge, and that it was only on his return that he perished on the shores of Ethiopia, whose apostle Frumentius subsequently became.

The young Greek orphans, brought to the king then ruling in the country, were soon found to be of great capacity, and worthy of being trusted. Thus were they in course of time raised to important offices in the State and at court, and at the death of the monarch, although by his will he had left them free to return to their country if they chose, the widowed queen obtained from them that they should remain, to help her in the administration of the kingdom, and for the education of the late king's heir, who was then a child.

Frumentius, the most talented of the two young Greeks, was already ardent in his zeal for the Christian religion. He first encouraged the colonists of Hellenic birth or origin to declare themselves openly Christian, and to meet together for religious purposes.

He enabled them to procure public places of worship, which could not yet be called churches, since it seems they had no ordained priests among them. The text of Rufinus even goes nearly to prove that, as early as this time, the young man did not confine himself to encouraging the believers in Christ to an open profession of their faith, but that he used his great power in the State to induce some of the natives to adopt it, and receive instruction in it, so as to form a nursery of plants where "*the seed of Christians might begin to grow.*"\* It does not seem, however, that Frumentius could then prudently inculcate the doctrine of salvation to the young king whom he educated ; since the royal pupil probably lived and died a pagan, although the contrary is stated in an Ethiopic *Synaxarium ad diem 26 mensis Hamle*, which appears to be a later composition of little authority.

Recent researches in the previous history of the country have brought out several most important results. It is now known, that at the time of the violent death of Meropios, Ela-Eskendi was king of Ethiopia, and died the year following ; that the young prince who succeeded him, and was educated by Frumentius, was called Tzahem, and reigned nine years only. His successor—not his son, since Tzahem died too young to have issue—was that very Ela-San, who raised the obelisk, and procured the inscription to be sculptured on it, as it has been detailed at length. A short but clear chronological discussion by the new Bollandists, proves that Frumentius and Ædesius were first brought to the country early in the fourth century, and that the return of the first as bishop could not have taken place before 350, or most probably 353. This brings down the first open evangelization of Ethiopia to the reign of Constantius, and not to that of Constantine, as was formerly supposed. Thus, several difficulties which obscured the true origin of Christianity in this country, completely disappear ; and it becomes also an indubitable fact, that the power of the Ethiopian monarch at the time extended toward the east, over a great part of Arabia Felix, on the further side of the Red Sea, and by conquest, toward the west as far as the Nile, over a great portion of the former kingdom of Meroë. It is seen at once how important was the apostleship of Frumentius, how large a part of Asia and Africa it annexed to the

\* "Ita cæteros cohortari, favere et beneficiis invitare, præstare quicquid opportunum fuisset, loca ædificiis, aliaque necessaria præbere, et omnino gestire, ut Christianorum inibi semen exurgeret."—Hist. Eccl. lib. i., cap. ix.

Church, and that the present kingdom of Abyssinia, reduced to its actual state, cannot give any idea of it. The reflection will also strike the reader that it was then really a true branch of the Catholic Church, and remained so, in spite of the vain efforts of Constantius, until Dioscorus brought heresy and schism on the Patriarchal See of Alexandria, that is, during something more than a century. The main details of this most interesting history require our attention, the more so that it refers undeniably to an African race, at all times previously free from the Egyptian yoke, never comprised within the limits of the Roman sway, and which has fought valiantly and successfully until our day, against the constant danger of Mussulman invasion and slavery. It was but yesterday that it resisted successfully the last attack of the Khedive.

The young king Tzahem was no more a child, and the two Greek brothers could hope to obtain more easily their return home, from their royal pupil and his grateful mother. The grace of God had called Frumentius to be an apostle, and he knew the first thing to be done for the conversion of Ethiopia was to procure both a bishop and some priests to found the Church in Eastern Africa, and gather a rich harvest ready for the sickle, but left without laborers. He intended, therefore, only to go to Alexandria, and lay at the feet of Athanasius the ardent desire of his heart. Ædesius, his brother, did not feel the same inclination; he only longed to see his country again, and spend the remainder of his life among his relatives and friends. A few words must conclude what this narrative has to say of him, that we may return to Frumentius. Having reached Tyre, then a Christian city, Ædesius quietly settled among his fellow-citizens, and although not fervid enough to embrace an apostolic life, and become again a willing exile to work at the conversion of a whole people, yet he wished to devote entirely to God the remainder of his days, and thus he was ordained priest in his native city. Several years afterward he received the visit of Rufinus of Aquileia, so well known on account of his long and acrimonious controversy with St. Jerome; and by a very natural mistake he was the cause of an error which has unfortunately thrown, during a long time, doubts on the Indian mission of St. Thomas. Ædesius, perfectly certain that the Gospel had never been preached in Ethiopia, and thinking that this country was truly a part of India itself, which he had visited when a child with his guardian and his brother, was the innocent cause of the misapprehension of Rufinus, who thought he

was authorized from the story of the Tyrian priest to state in his *Ecclesiastical History*\* that “India lies farther on, inhabited by many nations speaking different languages, and on account of its remoteness, no apostle had preached in it.” Consequently he imagined that when the apostles received their mission, Thomas was sent to Parthia, not to India; and several Byzantine historians—Socrates, Sozomenus, and Theodoretus—drawn into error by the mistake of the presbyter of Aquileia, spoke of Eastern geography in so confused a manner, that the majority of modern critics, such as Ludolph, Pagi, Letronne, Thos. Wright, etc., believed that most of the ancient writers did not know any other India than Ethiopia and Arabia. Yet all Rufinus had done, in fact, was to place Ethiopia in Hindostan, on account of the narrative of Ædesius, which caused him to suppose that no apostle had yet preached in real Hindostan. The Tyrian priest was sure that Ethiopia had never heard the Gospel of Christ before he was taken there with his brother Frumentius. On such poor grounds rests mainly the denial of the mission of St. Thomas in India, which the Bollandists, in their twelfth volume of October, promise to *demonstrate*, when they reach the hagiography of December the twenty-first.

Frumentius, on his way home with Ædesius, stopped at Alexandria, where Athanasius, fortunately, was enjoying a short time of rest after his numerous wanderings. Rufinus, through another mistake, not so fatal, however, as the first, supposes that the great Archbishop of Alexandria had just been raised to the episcopate; the meaning certainly of his words: *nuper sacerdotium suscepisse*. This would establish the date of 326 or 327 for the voyage of Frumentius to Egypt, and throw the whole of his subsequent apostleship into confusion. The Bollandists prove that it happened in fact in 346 or 347, just after the return of St. Athanasius from Rome, when he could openly take charge of his flock, and was for some time allowed by Constantius himself to fulfill the duties of his office. To him, therefore, the young Tyrian Greek came, and reported the hope there was of converting a nation until then almost unknown. Frumentius was well acquainted with the dispositions of the Ethiopians; he was persuaded that no obstacle would be found among them to the universal acceptance of the doctrines of Christ. The only measure to be taken was the selection of a zealous pastor, who by a legitimate

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\* Book i., ch. ix.

ordination would receive the hierarchical powers needed absolutely for the foundation of the Church anywhere on earth.

"Whom could we find," exclaimed Athanasius, "more fit than you to remove from the eyes of this people the vail of error, and to enlighten them with the splendor of the divine Word?" In spite of his remonstrances, Frumentius had to consent to be consecrated first bishop of this vast country. But as, in his checkered life, since his infancy, he had scarcely had the means of knowing more than the elements of the Christian religion; as, moreover, the epoch was one of singular mental activity, and the field of theology was enlarged and enriched every day by the victories of orthodoxy against heresy and schism; as the danger of the falling off of many was increased by the looseness then existing of the hierarchical rules which so far had formed the only bond of unity besides the interior love of Christ and his Church; a somewhat protracted time was required, and probably insisted upon by Frumentius, to initiate him in all that was demanded of a bishop destined for a far-distant country, and fated to spend a great part of his life in a total separation from the rest of his brethren. He, consequently, remained in Alexandria until about 351 or 352, when he went back to Ethiopia.

His pupil, Tzahem, had died, and Ela-San had begun a glorious reign by the subjection of several neighboring nations. Axum was then a magnificent city. Many monuments, whose ruins encumber now the dreary wilderness, had already been raised by former Ethiopian monarchs, and by Ela-San himself, whose obelisk, now still standing, must then have been a glorious landmark, with its proud inscription carved by a Grecian chisel. That the new bishop was welcome there can be no doubt, since the king himself, until that time a pagan, soon became a disciple of Christ. Was the old queen alive, who had been so kind to him and to his brother? We have no means of knowing; but if she was, it is to be presumed that, like all female converts of rank and noble blood, she placed herself at the head of all the generous schemes devised by the man of God for the rapid extension of Christianity throughout the country. Unfortunately, the details of the apostolic labors of Frumentius have not been preserved in writing. Only generalities are mentioned in the few pages kept yet in manuscript, and published by several recent travelers and missionaries. It is said there that "he baptized converts, ordained priests, built many churches, pulled down the idolatrous temples, broke in pieces the idols, and initiated the whole

nation in the knowledge and worship of the true God." Prodigies and miracles followed him wherever he went; and the report of many of them reached even the ears of his brother *Ædesius* in Tyre, since Rufinus speaks of them in his *History*.

"The king," it is related, "and every one else were amazed, and repeated telling him: 'Many years hast thou lived formerly with us, and we never saw thee in possession of such a power as this; whence hast thou received so suddenly a divine gift of this nature?' 'It does not come from me,' he answered, 'but, O dear friends in Christ, it flows from the priesthood, or rather from Christ himself. For when I left you, knowing your excellent dispositions, I put aside the thought of friends and country, and listened to the voice of God, and instead of returning home, I went to Alexandria, where I met the great Athanasius. He heard from me what I had to report of you, and pouring on my head the sacred unction, he communicated to me the apostolic gifts, and sent me back to you with his prayers.'" \*

We can easily picture to ourselves the daily labors of the pious and tender-hearted apostle; for everything written concerning him emits the fragrance of sweetness and simple affection. The Ethiopians expressed it most felicitously in the name they gave him. The nearest approach they could make to his own was *Feremonatos*; but they knew instinctively as well as Plato, that a name to be right ought to render, as much as possible, all the characters of the thing itself; and thus they called him *Salama*, that is, *Pacificus*. The reader at once imagines he sees another Patrick in his holy rambles, and cannot but wonder at the perfect similarity of both men and their work. No persecution ever opposed the word of God in Ethiopia, the same as in Ireland; and Frumentius, like Patrick, had to travel himself over the whole country, which he likewise converted entirely to Christianity. The African Evangelist may have remained at first a certain time in Axum, the capital, where he had so many friends, and which was to be the center of all his operations; but when the great city had become altogether Christian, he must have begun to roam all over the country, to communicate to all the inappreciable boon. The remainder of his life, consequently, must have been employed in inconceivable apostolic labors, through dreary regions half of the year inundated by tropical rains, and the

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\* *Acta Sanct.*, tom. xii. Oct., p. 268.

other half burnt by the sultry heat of an African sun. But what joy he experienced when, at the end of his life, he saw the whole country at the feet of Christ, and the true God worshiped everywhere from the Red Sea to the Nile ! For there is not a word of dissent or of doubt even in all that has been recorded of Frumentius, about the wonderful fact that he converted the whole nation.

In the act of intimating that generalities only are known with respect to all this strange history, a most remarkable event which must have happened by the instrumentality of our Salama, was not taken into account, merely because it is not absolutely proved by written documents that it belonged to his time and to him, although there is a great probability of it. But as it was certainly a fact connected with the conversion of Ethiopia, and which must have taken place under Ela-San, the first Christian king, it ought to be mentioned here in detail. For the occurrence is now perfectly well ascertained, and nothing is more calculated to impress the reader with the real importance of the religious revolution achieved at that epoch in Africa. This is the change of the former chief temple of the nation at Axum into the first Catholic cathedral of Ethiopia. The whole history of it has been lately cleared up by the Bollandist Fathers ; and if there is in it a great deal that is calculated to create surprise, it is nevertheless absolutely certain, as all the details have been verified by the best and most competent of all recent travelers.

Some modern Cyclopædias assert that “there is at Axum a church, considered the most sacred building in all Abyssinia, ‘around which lie scattered unfinished or broken columns, pedestals, and other remnants of the civilization of former ages.’ The church is about *two hundred years old.*” This is the quotation. Unless the writer intended to speak of a modern church erected by the Jesuit Fathers, about two centuries ago, on the spot and over the remaining foundations of a former edifice, which was indeed “the most sacred building in all Abyssinia,” he was completely misinformed, and cannot but lead the reader into error. The modern building is indeed now almost in ruins, but the solid substructure on which it stood is the only part of the edifice of which we speak. Theophile Lefèvre is, among the travelers of a recent date, the one who has taken more pains to measure and describe it. “The foundations of this ancient pile,” he says, “which alone have remained, and in the midst of which the modern church of Axum stands up, prove abundantly its former size and splendor. The large steps leading to the peristyle, kept yet

in a perfect state of preservation, were ten in number, each of them sixty centimeters wide, and seventy meters long"—that is to say, about two feet wide and two hundred and thirty-five long. "They brought you to a level space, four meters wide and fifty-eight meters long, on which rested either the *acroter* or other steps guiding to the doors of the temple. The edifice itself formed a perfect square, each side of sixty-three meters" (about two hundred feet). "The heavy, immense stones of amphibolic syenite, show how protracted and hard must have been the labor required for preparing and placing them in position, and that the builders must have been perfectly well acquainted with all the arts connected with mechanics and ballistics. The smallest of these stones are three or four meters (more than twelve feet) long, seventy or eighty centimeters wide, and thirty-five or forty centimeters high."\*

The Portuguese Jesuit, Emmanuel d'Almeida, had already, long ago, described the same magnificent ruins, and Father Tellez, in his *Historia geral de Ethiopia*, gives from him several interesting details concerning them. It is there stated, in particular, that the edifice must have had primitively one middle nave with four aisles, two on each side. Father d'Almeida did not make any mention of the colossal steps described by Lefèvre ; but the dimensions he gave of the central building are not very different from those of this last writer. Bruce, last century, had likewise visited the spot, and given his opinion about its age, which he made a little older than it really is. From a Greek inscription which he saw engraved on one of the large stone seats, standing yet in his time around the peristyle, he thought that the whole fabric had been erected by Ptolemy Euergetes I. No other traveler, after him, could find anything of these stone seats, nor of the inscription. The new Bollandists think that the edifice dates only from the first century of our era, for the excellent reason, that this was the time when Axum was, if not built, at least embellished, and enriched with the greatest number of the monuments whose ruins are now scattered around. They intend to give all the proofs of it in a long dissertation on ancient Ethiopia, which they promise in the same volume.

But whether this most remarkable temple was built at the time of Ptolemy Euergetes or during the first century of our era, it is certain that it was then a pagan structure, since polytheism was the

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\* *Voyage en Abyssinie*, tom. iii., p. 431, et seq.

religion of the kings of the country until after 350, when Ela-San embraced Christianity. There can be no doubt that it was changed into a Christian church at this time of his conversion, and that it was the same edifice mentioned in the life of St. Elesbaa, in 519, when this good king went in procession "to the most holy and great church of God, where the kings and bishops of the country are buried," as the Acts of St. Arethas relate. To conclude in a few words its history, we have only to tell that, according to Sapeto, in the year 925, the city of Axum was almost completely destroyed by a Jewish Amazon of the name of Gudit or Esther, and that this temple must have suffered severely during and after the siege. But the Ethiopic annals preserved yet in the archives of the actual church of Axum attribute to the expedition of the Mussulman Arabs under Gragne, in 1526 or 1530, according to Bruce, the total destruction of the magnificent superstructure. It was thus reduced to a heap of ruins, with only the foundations intact, when in the next century the Catholic missionaries built on the same site, but on a much reduced scale, the actual edifice which is, it seems, the only piece of antiquity known to modern writers of cyclopædias.

From the whole of this narrative the conclusion forces itself upon the mind that the Apostle of Ethiopia, the good and pious Salama, as his converts loved to call him, purified the idolatrous temple built three or four hundred years before him, and made of it the cathedral, not of the diocese only, but of the vast country which he evangelized ; so that it is called with justice "the most holy place in all Abyssinia." Always on terms of intimacy with the king, beloved certainly by the whole nation, powerful beyond all belief through his goodness of heart and mildness of manners, Frumentius, or Salama—should this last name be preferred—was the man most likely to succeed in turning the dwelling of idols which he had broken down, according to the Axum chronicle, into the visible sanctuary of the Supreme God whom he came to preach.

#### 7. *Early history of the Ethiopian Church after Frumentius.*

The interesting question presents itself now to our consideration, Was the apostolic work of Salama permanent ? Having been so rapid and universal, did it partake of the instability of enterprises effected hastily ? a very appropriate subject of discussion, to which we now turn, and which may increase our wonder, owing chiefly to what is generally thought to be the idiosyncrasy of African races.

There can be no doubt that for a whole century after Ela-San, the Ethiopian kings, together with the whole nation, remained faithful not only to Salama and the bishops who followed him, but also to the Catholic Church in the person of Athanasius and his successors in the see of Alexandria. We will have presently the proof of it, particularly in the inscription of Tazena, as far, at least, as the continuance of pure religion in the country can be proved. In the very first days of the preaching of Frumentius, an effort had been made by Constantius to sow the seeds of Arianism in the new Church, and as this interesting particularity of the life of Salama did not naturally come in the previous short narrative, and falls in more appropriately within the question under consideration, a word, at least, is required on the subject.

A few years after the return of Frumentius to Ethiopia, the unworthy successor of Constantine, though he had lately allowed Athanasius to re-enter his diocese—growing soon weary of justice and right, and free from the importunities of his Catholic brother Constans, who had just died—turned fiercely and suddenly against the great archbishop. Not satisfied with compelling him to fly again, he attempted to meddle with the religious affairs of the Ethiopians, and tried to get into his power the person of their apostle on the very threshold of his ministry. He wrote, therefore, to Ela-San (called by the Greeks Aizanas), and to his brother-king Sazanas, a letter which has been preserved for us by Athanasius in his *Apologia*. It is there prefaced by a few forcible words in which the archbishop depicts vividly the impious rage of Cæsar, which we transcribe: “It is far from being worthy of a pious emperor to exterminate bishops, disrobe virgins, and spread disturbance in all the churches. These were our thoughts at the beginning of a new banishment, when for the third time rumor brought us the news, that you—Constantius—had written to the kings of Axum, demanding of them that they should send away from their country Frumentius, the Axumite bishop; that they would take upon themselves to look for me everywhere, even among barbarians, in order to give me up to your prefects, and force their own people and clergy to embrace the Arian heresy.”

Thus we have the purpose of the letter of Constantius to Ela-San expressed clearly and strongly. A few passages of the letter itself will show yet better its nefarious object. The emperor, of course, protests that his only aim is to have the true dogmas received in all

the churches: "On this account send back to Egypt," he says, "the bishop Frumentius, and have him brought to the venerable George and the other Egyptian prelates, in whom reside the supreme authority for the creation and appointment of bishops."—The reader is aware that George was the Arian intruder who replaced the legitimate pastor in Alexandria.—"You know," the letter continued, "that Frumentius was ordained by Athanasius, a man guilty of all crimes, of which he could not justify himself; and on that account was he deposed from his see, and now he wanders a fugitive in the immensity of the wilderness, as if by constant moving he could escape from his misdeeds."

And, to condense a long passage which comes directly after, the emperor promises that if Frumentius willingly consents to have his life and doctrine examined in Alexandria by those who have a right to inquire into the subject, and proves his morality and orthodoxy, he will be sent back to Axum with a new and legitimate episcopal character. But should he continue to adhere to the *miscreant* Athanasius, and with him to *act impiously toward God*, Axum will not see him again; as he will be prevented from contaminating by his blasphemous discourses the good people of Ethiopia, and from spreading everywhere the spirit of dissension and rebellion. The deluded emperor concluded this foolish epistle by the words: "God preserves you, dear brethren."

Ela-San was most probably already a Christian when he received this letter, and there is no means of knowing what effect it produced on him. It is very likely that he communicated it to Frumentius, who was the very person to explain it, and give on this occasion to the nation and its king a real horror of Arianism. It is proved by the various professions of faith of the Ethiopian Church, and by their liturgy, that this fatal error never penetrated into the country, and it was a long time after that they were induced to adopt monophysism; but as to the divinity of Christ, not a single one of their bishops or priests was ever known to have believed differently from the Catholic Church.

This attempt, therefore, of the Arian emperor failed entirely; and Salama, followed everywhere by the benedictions of the nation and of the king, established the true faith from the Red Sea to the Nile. But the question presents itself, What after his death? This requires a short discussion.

No one has thrown more light on the history, secular and eccl-

siastical, of Ethiopia, since the establishment of Christianity, than Aug. Dillmann, who published with annotations the catalogues of kings contained in all the Ethiopian manuscripts preserved in London, chiefly those which had been brought by the Scotchman, James Bruce. These are the true sources of a history which otherwise would be a puzzle. From them many facts have been ascertained, others have acquired more or less probability. The learned German—Aug. Dillmann—proved first that all the Ethiopian manuscript catalogues brought to Europe by Andrew Schott, James Bruce, Salt, Combes, and Tamisier, Ruppell, and the Catholic missionary J. Sapeto, can be referred to three well-authenticated classes; and thus criticism by comparing them could settle the right spelling of the uncouth names, and reach with more probability, if not certainty, historical truth.

Helped by the labors of Aug. Dillmann, the Bollandist Fathers have been able to give a correct list of the kings who succeeded Ela-San, the friend of Frumentius, as far down at least as the end of the sixth century. All the details of their reigns that could be collected from inscriptions, from Ethiopian hagiographers, and also from contemporary Greek writers, are to be given in the very important dissertation on "Ancient Ethiopia," which the Bollandists have promised to publish. In the life of St. Elesbaa, however, as well as in that of St. Frumentius, many historical points are settled, and the main conclusions of an arduous critical labor are substantiated. From the whole work it is evident that for at least a hundred years after Salama, that is, until later than the middle of the fifth century, the kings of Ethiopia were Christians. At this last epoch, toward 450, two brothers—Abreha and Atzbeha—reigned together. Not only their open profession of the Christian religion is ascertained; but in the canon of the Ethiopic liturgy their memory is blessed by the words: *Memento, Domine, Regum Ethiopiarum Abreha et Atzbeha;* and in the *Senkassar* or menologium of the Church, the following commemoration is found on the 1st day of October: *Hodie commemorationis mortis regum justorum Abreha et Atzbeha.* Thus both these sovereigns are numbered among the saints in the Abyssinian Church.

Moreover, it is certain that Alameda, a subsequent king of the country, gained in 478 a great victory over the Jewish Homerites, in Arabia Felix, and as a token of his gratitude to God he called from the Greek Empire, or rather from Egypt, then subject to it, a new bishop with nine holy monks of the order of St. Antony, to

work for the restoration of the Christian religion throughout the country. Directly after Alameda, Tazena, and Elesbaa, his son, appear as thorough Christian princes, as shall be presently proved.

The Bollandists, however, think that Alameda was a pagan when he won that victory, that all the nation was likewise pagan, all the former Christian temples had been restored to polytheism, in fact, that there had been an interruption of fifty years in the Christianity of Ethiopia.

Unless some better proofs of it are given in the promised dissertation on Ancient Ethiopia than are stated in the lives of Frumentius and Elesbaa, we cannot admit these conclusions ; and for the following reasons :

First, from the reign of the Christian kings Abreha and Atzbeha in 450, to the victory of Alameda in 478, there are twenty-eight years, and not fifty, as is supposed by the Bollandists. Could, in so short a time, the nation have passed through such revolutions as a complete return to paganism, and afterwards a thorough restoration of Christianity, without any social convulsion, or even open persecution, of which not a word is said in the history of the country ? Saladoba, the predecessor of Alameda, must in that case have been a polytheist, and most probably the prince immediately preceding him, whose name even we could not find as certainly proved, must have been the immediate or very near successor of Abreha and Atzbeha, and to him must be ascribed the restoration of paganism all over the land. Is this possible ?

Secondly, the Bollandist Fathers think that the whole nation had returned to polytheism, merely for the reason that the king had done so ; and in their opinion, as the king believed, so the entire people must have believed. To this we object entirely. About the same time, or at least not long before, Julian had apostatized in Rome, and yet did not bring the Romans back with him to idolatry. It is credible that so soon after the apostleship of Frumentius, when his memory was so universally and so constantly blessed, it would have been, in a moment, considered by the same people as accursed, and his doctrine as an absurd superstition ? Can such a fickleness as this be considered as natural and probable in the Ethiopian race ?

Thirdly, the Abyssinian nation have proved their natural steadfastness in Christian belief and practice in the most unfavorable circumstances : either in the tenth century, when attacked by Gudit, the Jewish queen, or, better still, during so many ages, against the often

renewed attempts of the Arabs to convert them to Islam. Can they have been so inconstant after their conversion?

It seems to be proved indeed that Alameda was not a Christian before his victory over the Homerites. Does it follow that the whole people was likewise pagan? It is clear that the labor of the new bishop and his nine monks of St. Antony was crowned with success, and that there was a revival of religion through the country. Must it be necessarily supposed that Christianity was extinct when they arrived? A few words on these two questions may explain away the whole difficulty.

Alameda and one or two of his predecessors may very well have practiced idolatry, and yet the people have remained Christian, although, perhaps, their faith might have required the stirring up of a revival. Many nations around Abyssinia, at the time, worshiped yet idols; and it can be easily understood that as formerly in Judea several kings adopted the polytheism of Phœnicia or Syria, so likewise some of the rulers of Ethiopia, corrupted by their alliances and friendship with neighboring kings, might have renounced Christianity, and returned to the idolatry of their ancestors. But to conclude forthwith that the whole nation did so, and that the worship of Christ had died away entirely in the whole country, is an unwarranted supposition, which, at least, can be pronounced not to be proved.

It is true, Ethiopian historical sources vouch for the fact that Alameda, at his conversion, obtained from Justinian—rather Justinus, often called Justinian the First by Oriental writers—a bishop and nine monks of St. Antony, whose mission is perfectly well established in Abyssinian history. They came from Egypt, and the bishop's name was John, formerly *mansionarius* in the Alexandrian Church. The names of the monks are likewise well ascertained; Pantaleon was the most celebrated among them, and they are all considered as saints in Ethiopia. In the catalogue of the Abyssinian bishops John is placed the sixth after St. Frumentius, and the Bollandists believe that there is an interruption between him and the previous one, or the fifth. They think, consequently, that the archbishop of Alexandria had ceased to send an *Abuna* to Axum at the death of the fifth in regular succession. This is, in their eyes, a further proof of a real interruption of the Christian faith in the country. They, however, concede that this want of continuity in the line of bishops is not positively proved, and is a mere probability.

That the holy monks of St. Antony, with the bishop at their head, produced a great deal of good for religion in the country, and revived the drooping faith of the people, cannot be denied. But did they in truth replant Christianity in a country where it had been rooted out? We cannot be brought to believe it. The expressions of the various Ethiopian documents which note down with some details the great success of their apostolic labors, are undoubtedly of a sweeping character; but it is well known that in such circumstances as these, the writers who immediately follow the laborers, and who, most probably, had been immensely benefited morally and religiously, by this spiritual revival, are apt to increase the brightness of the picture, by representing the former state of the people as worse than it really was. Yet no one can ascribe this excess of admiration for favorite preachers to a settled determination, fixed on exaggerating knowingly what they had all witnessed. What was written was written in good faith; still, it conveys more than the facts themselves would strictly allow.

And it is undeniable that the very learned men who have drawn such conclusions from the documents they obtained at so great a cost and labor, on which they comment with so remarkable a skill, and with no other object than to establish the truth of history, never intended to pretend that the labors of Frumentius had been all in vain; yet it is strange they can suppose that the nation he had converted, evidently with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, should have, after a few years, entirely apostatized from the faith. For the Bollandists, Frumentius is always, and will always remain, the Apostle of Ethiopia. The evident conclusion is, that the fruit of his labor had not entirely perished a short century after his death.

Whatever may have been, therefore, the individual religion of Alameda, and of one or two of his predecessors on the throne of Axum, the nation had not altogether relapsed into paganism. In less than thirty years—let us say fifty, since this number is given in the Life of St. Elesbaa—the whole country, governed previously by Ela-San, and embracing the vast territory which has been described, could not pass through the agitation of two thorough revolutions, such as are necessarily implied in the complete loss and recovery of Christianity. We observe two holy kings—Abreha and Atzbeha—in 450, and a great Christian king—Tazena—succeeding quietly to Alameda, fifty years later; and we cannot admit that, in the interval, such rapid and thorough changes as these could have taken place

in the country without any other authentic record of them than a few incidental phrases, from which alone it is coolly concluded that such was indeed the case. This must be considered a little longer.

A few words have been sufficient to prove the Christian holiness of the two brother-kings in the middle of the fifth century; some remarks are at least required on the most important inscription of Tazena, at the end of the same century or the beginning of the next. The conclusion cannot be but a strong confirmation of the preceding reflections. Tazena was the immediate successor of Alameda, and in spite of the monument of which we are going to speak, some critics have also pretended that he was not a Christian. They do not maintain this time that he had brought back the nation to the worship of idols, but on the strength of a few ambiguous words they make of him a pagan, without minding in the least his own eloquent inscription. Thus, mere grammatical criticism, without taking into account the strongest intrinsic proofs, would render history impossible. The Bollandist Fathers unhesitatingly believe he was a Christian, when the monument was raised; they concede, however, that he might not have been a worshiper of the true God when he began his reign. In our eyes a look at the inscription itself is sufficient to preclude any doubt on the subject. It is to Father Sapeto that we owe the true interpretation of it, and it was for him a hard and long labor to come at anything satisfactory.

“By the virtue of God, creator of heaven and earth; by the virtue of the Eternal Lord, from whom Tazena, son of Alameda, received his kingdom, and was made King of Axum, and of Hamer, and of Raidan, and of Saba,” etc. . . .

From these very first words it is evident that Tazena was a Christian when he succeeded to his father Alameda. It would have been perfectly inconsistent in a convert, at that epoch, to say that he had received his kingly power from the true God, when at the time he worshiped false deities. That political power comes from God to a pagan king, is well understood by us, because of the more exact notions we have of divine Providence. But the king of Ethiopia, at that epoch, would at least have made mention of the fact that he was not a worshiper of the Eternal Lord when he became king of Axum, yet did not receive his kingdom from his false gods. Toward the end of the inscription he repeats again that “arrived at the confluent of the rivers Takazze and Saïda”—not far from Shendi—. . . “he there established his throne, by the virtue

of the God of Heaven, who had helped him, and given him his kingdom." He, therefore, acknowledged the supremacy of the "God of Heaven" when he succeeded to his father Alameda, and began his reign, since it was from the "God of Heaven" that he received his power, and not from any false deities or demons.

In another part of the same document, Tazena states that "an hostile, idolatrous nation from Nubia had pillaged his territory, devastated his provinces, and put to the sword twice or three times the faithful of Christ. . . . Then the Christians"—he says—"sent us deputies to ask if we could look with indifference on such a devastation? . . . And we answered, No. I, therefore, declared war to the enemy, and I stood up by the virtue of God, and I pursued the idolaters during twenty-three days, putting them to the sword, taking possession of their spoils, and making slaves of the male prisoners. . . ."

This is the language of a Christian king, addressing his Christian subjects, and protecting them against idolatrous enemies. That he should have been himself, at any time previously, an idolater, and enemy to the Christian religion, without saying at least a word of it, can scarcely be comprehended. What would become of history if the contrary opinion were true? The father of the monarch who placed this inscription under the eyes of his subjects, had been, it seems, a pagan at first; but a victory with extraordinary circumstances, had opened his eyes; and through his instrumentality, several men of God, a bishop at their head, had come from Alexandria, and revived in the hearts of the people their former strong attachment to the Christian religion, and their strict obedience to its precepts. The nation, at the death of Alameda, was yet in the fervor of their faith and love; the churches were prospering, the missionaries ardent in their work; the old king died, no doubt, animated by the same feelings. How can we suppose that his family, his sons and daughters, had remained pagans, alone, in the country? As a stronger proof of the impossibility of such a thing as this, we read a long inscription, engraved a few years afterward by the order of the son and successor of the converted monarch—an inscription breathing in fact the strongest attachment to Christianity, and commemorating a kind of religious war undertaken in the interest of true worship against idolatrous enemies. How can we avoid the conclusion that Tazena was merely following the example of his Christian father in his zeal for the honor and glory of God, and that he was

indeed a Christian king succeeding another, both being at the head of a truly Christian nation ? If it were otherwise, it can be again repeated that history would become incomprehensible, as there would be no sequence in the various events which go to compose it.

Chiefly must this be true, when a glance is given at the reign of Elesbaa, son and successor to Tazena. In him we see a great and powerful monarch fighting for religion against the pagans and Jews of Arabia, combining his efforts with those of the emperors of Constantinople against the Persian kings, merely because the Sassanidæ were persecutors of Christianity ; and finally ending his days in a monastery, as did some great princes of Europe in the ages of faith. Such a vigor of belief, such a steadiness of purpose, such a supernatural view of things and men, suppose in the nation and its rulers an ardor of spiritual life incompatible with the mobility implied in the opposite supposition. In this last case the Ethiopians would have been as childish and unreliable as are at this time the fickle populations of Madagascar ; but the best historical evidence, on the contrary, proves them to have been at the time as steady Christians as were our European ancestors four or five centuries ago.

It is proved now beyond contradiction that during the reigns of Justinus and Justinian in Constantinople, when Alameda, Tazena, and Elesbaa were kings of Eastern Ethiopia, there was a frequent intercourse between the two countries. John of Malala, and John, the monophysite bishop of Asia, in the fragments which remain of their writings, speak only of one of those occurrences, and likewise confound into one the three different expeditions of the kings of Ethiopia against the Homerites in Arabia Felix. But the manuscripts brought lately from Abyssinia to Europe, and the different inscriptions and relics of antiquity which have been discovered and studied, prove that for a long time the independent Empire of Eastern Ethiopia was in frequent communication with the Greek Empire of Constantinople ; and it was particularly the Christian feeling common to both which was the bond of union between the two. On one occasion Justinian, in order to induce Elesbaa to declare war against the king of Persia, gave him no other reason than the terrible persecution against Catholicity carried on constantly by the Sassanidæ ; and this reason was amply sufficient in the eyes of the African monarch. It is true that there was a political motive likewise ; and the people, aside of the king, seem to have been chiefly moved by it. But that very motive implies such large views of polity and social

welfare, that the nation is certainly proved by the whole transaction to have been an enlightened and civilized people for a long time before. It seems that previous to the extension of the power of the Sassanidæ around the Persian Gulf, the bulk of the commerce of Africa and Southern Asia with Hindostan was carried on through the Ethiopians, who possessed, as was seen, a great part of Arabia Felix. But since the fleets of the Persian kings began to swarm along their southern coast, a few days' sailing brought on their merchant ships to the Malabar coast of India ; and thus the trade of Ethiopia with the East was either totally suppressed or greatly reduced. This was a severe loss for the subjects of the African monarch of Axum ; and they could not but engage with ardor in a war which might crush the Persian power on the sea. But the pious king Elesbaa saw in it, above all, a means of punishing a dynasty of blood-thirsty persecutors of the Christians. And it is to be remarked that as, at this time, monophysism and Nestorianism prevailed extensively through the Persian dominion, and either of them never experienced any effect of the tyrant's scourge, reserved exclusively for the Catholics, it becomes a fact absolutely proved that in the sixth century the Catholicity of Ethiopia cannot be brought into question, and that for more than two hundred years after their conversion, the Abyssinians had never embraced schism or heresy. All these considerations go to prove that the apostleship of Frumentius had not been so barren of results as many even learned men are apt to believe. The religion of the Ethiopians was then a solid, pure, unadulterated Catholic Christianity ; yet the race was African ; their means of intercourse with Christian Europe and Asia had been for a long time scanty ; or rather, they had been, previous to Alameda, almost totally separated from the civilized world ; and south and west of them lived numerous barbarian nations of idolaters or fetichists.

But it is said and believed by a great number of men that they were, at the time, as they have been ever since, more than half Jews, and consequently of a rather doubtful creed, and more than doubtful morality. A word or two are required on the subject.

It is a positive fact that as at this moment, so for many centuries, the Abyssinians have practiced circumcision, abstained from eating pork, and showed more or less a Jewish respect for Saturday in the sense of the Mosaic Sabbath. Circumcision along the coast of the Red Sea seems to have been as ancient as in Egypt, that is, goes back to an unknown antiquity. It seems to be with them rather a

sanitary measure than a religious rite, and it partakes more of the form used by Mussulmans than of that which is practiced by the Jews. It existed certainly in the country long before St. Frumentius, who must have abolished it, since he had received his power and instructions from Athanasius. But it revived when a modified Judaism was re-introduced into the country, as we will have presently occasion to state.

The abstinence from pork gives also rise to similar remarks. As to the celebration of the Jewish Sabbath, it was, it seems, the custom, when Catholic missionaries re-entered the country in 1555, to set apart the Saturday, not the Sunday, for the public worship of God.

Together with these three points of contact with Judaism in Abyssinia, many private practices, habits of thought, and manners of speech, as well as traditions, and historical allusions, or false legends, savor there of Mosaism rather than of Christianity. The question is, Did all this exist from the beginning? If not, when is it probable that it originated?

A general answer can be first given: Not only all this did not exist from the beginning, but for several centuries after the conversion of the country there were scarcely any Jews in Eastern Ethiopia, and it is only much later on that they began to migrate thither. Whence did they come? Not from Egypt, where they were found in great number it is true, but mostly in the Delta and near it. They must have come from the country of the Homerites, where they had continued to flourish ever since the time of Nabuchodonosor the Great. Many proofs of it could be given, which would detain us too long. To speak only of what it is necessary to know at this moment, it does not appear in the old Ethiopian MSS. and on the monuments, that there were Jews in the country before the end of the sixth century; and it is probably the war between Ethiopia and the Homerites in the time of St. Elesbaa, that opened to the Hebrews the doors of Africa across the Red Sea. Nothing, however, is said of them in the numerous documents which go to compose the life of St. Elesbaa, no more than in the writings of Cosmas Indicopleustes, who visited Ethiopia at the same epoch. With much less probability, still, would we look for any mention of them in the Acts of St. Frumentius, or in the inscriptions and remains of antiquity, dating from Ela-San or his immediate successors.

The fact is, that to find positive proofs of the introduction of

Judaism in the country, the student of history has to go down in the order of time as late as the tenth century, when, according to the records of that period, a Jewish queen from Arabia came, conquered the country, nearly destroyed every vestige of Christianity, and permanently introduced all the features of Judaism which have continued ever since, and which give to the Abyssinians a half-Hebrew look.

The reader can perceive that Judaism is in fact almost recent in Ethiopia ; and that during several centuries the Christian religion among the people had not the least tinge of Mosaism. When it was said in the previous paragraph that the first immigration of the Jews in Ethiopia might have dated from the expeditions of Elesbaa among the Homerites, it was only as a supposition which might be indulged in. But it is not supported by any tangible proof ; and the only date which can be assigned with certainty for the introduction of Judaism, and consequently of Hebrews in great number, is only the tenth century, and the war of extermination carried on in Abyssinia by Queen Gudit or Esther.

A few pages back some details were given on the Greek immigration into the country, which preceded by several centuries that of the Jews. Many of these Greek immigrants had settled in Ethiopia, and most certainly had intermarried with the natives, thus infusing Aryan blood in the veins of the race. We see now that a large incoming of Hebrews must have had subsequently the effect of propagating in this part of Africa the Semitic stock, and thus interfered with the original purity of the native race. When, therefore, it was said that the introduction of Christianity in Ethiopia proves its adaptability to the true African idiosyncrasies, and that consequently the Christian religion does not satisfy only the leanings of the Aryan family of nations, the intention was then to speak of it as it was primitively, at the time of Frumentius, its first apostle. There is no doubt that it must have been at that period nearly pure in the greatest part of the territory, as the Hellenic element was almost exclusively confined to the harbors on the Red Sea, and to Axum, the capital. It was, therefore, the Jewish invasion which really altered the original purity of the blood, and made of the Ethiopians a kind of half-breed race, such as they are to-day. But it has been seen that this took place most probably only in the tenth century of our era. Consequently the chain of argument holds good, and the history of Eastern Ethiopia proves that the general African leanings are not in truth opposed to the pure Christian doctrine and morality. When

Mahometanism shall die out completely in Africa, where it is fast rotting away, the spread of the Christian religion over that devoted continent may indeed start afresh, and take up the broken thread of conversion where Islamism found it, namely, on the central plateau where the Nile originates, a few degrees north of the great lakes discovered lately.

Meanwhile, we cannot but admire the steadfastness of the Ethiopians, through so long a succession of centuries, and under the most trying circumstances. If their peculiar kind of Christianity has admitted undesirable modifications, and real errors, first, in the monophysism they received from Alexandria, and much later on in the Jewish peculiarities just spoken of, at least they invariably preserved the most essential doctrines of religion, in the 'sacramental system, the validity of orders not interfered with by their unfortunate schism, and the whole array of supernatural tenets and practices, which they always kept, whilst Protestantism discarded them completely in a few years from its origin. Not only the divinity of Christ, the inspiration of Scripture, the authoritative voice of the Church in controverted matters, were in general accepted and insisted upon, although not carried to their last legitimate consequences; but the transubstantiation in the Eucharist, the invocation of saints, the prayers for the dead, the practice of fasting and abstaining, etc., etc., have always been most perseveringly held fast by them, as in all other Oriental churches.

But the true glory of the nation is their success in withstanding Mahometanism, and driving it away from their borders. All the Greecian countries formerly Christian have succumbed to Islam, and been reduced to a disgraceful slavery, first by the Arabs, and afterward by the Turks. They are at this time trying to shake off the yoke, and recover their former autonomy, which they can scarcely secure from revolutions, when they once enjoy it. Witness in this regard the wretched Greek kingdom, with its modernized Athens, and the lawless population of its mountains. Abyssinia, on the contrary, has never lost its autonomy, and never allowed mosques to be built within its limits. She stands yet to-day as a protest against the fallacy commonly believed in by the men of our age, that Africa belongs to Mahomet. They show that pure Africans can remain Christians in spite of a thousand odds. After centuries upon centuries of constant attacks from Mussulmans, which they have as constantly repulsed, they are masters, at least, of their share of Africa.

A year ago the Khedive wished to overrun their country, and abolish the succession of their native princes, to substitute for them his own authority. He was shamefully defeated in his ambitious views ; yet, had he succeeded, it is doubtful if he could have blotted out Christianity from the land. Should he have claimed liberty for his own creed, in which he does not believe himself, he would not have dared to turn their churches into mosques, and deprive them of the full enjoyment of their worship. They have established forever their title to it by ages of real heroism, and by their proud defiance against Islam in the very sight of Mecca, distant from them only the breadth of the Red Sea. When the Arabs began to devastate the world, an Ethiopian Christian king was in possession of Arabia Felix, just south of their holy city ; and when they became masters of a great part of Asia, the northern shore of Africa, and a slice of Europe, they had to endure the sight of the Axumites worshiping Christ under their own eyes, a few miles from the native country of their Prophet, and refusing to any of their sheiks and mollahs the right of preaching among them the falsehoods of the Koran and the shameless impostures of Mahomet. These are simple facts which cannot be the subject of any controversy or doubt, and which must redound to the honor of an unjustly despised race.

The Abyssinians, in fact, have been in the West what the natives of the Philippine Islands became later in the East : a firm and impassable rock, forever in the way of the further spread of Mussulmanism in both directions. As the native Ethiopians closed the road to the Upper Nile and the head-waters of the Congo River against the infuriated hosts of Islam, and thus permitted in course of time the conversion by Portuguese missionaries of numerous tribes along the southwestern coast of Africa ; so likewise the natives of Luzon, helped after a while by the Spaniards, prevented the Mahometans of India and Sumatra from reaching the numerous groups of islands in the Pacific, which are now in the way of conversion to Catholicity ; so that our holy religion is evidently destined to prevail all over that immense ocean.

But all these reflections concur evidently in one point, namely, the astonishing rapidity of the conversion of nations at the first preaching of Christianity, and the evident fulfillment of the ancient prophecies concerning the universality of the future Church. Had it not been for the rise of Mahometanism in the South, and for the errors of Buddhism, spread in the East by Gautama, there can be no doubt

that the almost absolute Catholicity of the Church would have been reached, and successfully obtained, a few hundred years after the apostles. The occasion will present itself of showing that this two-fold obstacle was but temporary. Yet, supposing that the extension of the Church should forever remain as it is at present, that is, nearly such as it was already in the fourth or fifth century, the Church could justly claim the title of Catholic, which all the Fathers gave her at the time.

And this astonishing fact speaks eloquently of the true source of a success altogether humanly inexplicable. Let any one, even if not a Christian, consider the religious and moral state of the world in the sixth century, just on the eve of the rise of Mahomet ; and try to render to himself an account of that strange belief, spread so rapidly on so extensive a part of the earth's surface. The four Gospels are seen at that time everywhere transcribed and propagated, and forming a body of traditions and doctrines which must forever continue on earth ; liturgies modeled on the same pattern disseminate holy rites, having all the same object, and proclaiming the vicarious sacrifice of a God-man, who at the same time by his sufferings propitiates the Almighty Father, and by his flesh and blood feeds the soul of the Christian ; the same authorized preachers appointed in all countries, to rule the Church, govern it, and teach infallibly what Christ and his apostles first taught and preached ; finally, a new set of moral, social, and religious ideas substituted everywhere for the old errors and superstitions, and molding men's minds into new and wonderful shapes, full of harmony and beauty. The books published, the sermons preached, the songs intoned, the prayers uttered in the Syriac language on the Euphrates, in the Coptic along the Nile, in the Persian beyond Mesopotamia, in the Ethiopian, or Amharic, in the country under consideration, in the Greek, in the Latin, in the Celtic tongues, in places of which not a word could yet be said in these pages, are all the same, that is, express the same feelings, the same view of things, the same faith, the same hope, the same love. And to put a finishing touch on this splendid moral and religious edifice, erected so suddenly and marvelously, the previous idolatry has disappeared, is now disowned, or rather anathematized and proscribed. Can all this be the work of men, of such men as were originally Peter, James, John, and the others ? But these reflections will come out more pointedly when more of the phenomenon has been described. We must now pass on to Arabia.

## CHAPTER VIII.

**EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN ARABIA.**—IN THE NORTH AMONG SEVERAL IMPORTANT TRIBES TRANSPLANTED FROM THE SOUTH—IN THE SOUTH PARTICULARLY—AMONG THE *ARABES SCENITÆ*, OR BEDOUINS IN THE DESERT.

1. *General description of Arabia.*

UNDER the name of Arabia the ancients designated a country much more extensive than the peninsula which now goes by that title. It comprised a part of Palestine as far as Gaza in the west, and all the arid region extending from the Jordan to the Euphrates, as far north as Thadmor or Palmyra; thus Damascus bloomed on the banks of the Abana and Pharpar, a few miles from the Arabian desert. In Mesopotamia, the Euphrates was not its limit; Xenophon tells us in his *Anabasis* that he met the *Arabes Scenitæ* a short distance north from the place where his ten thousand Greeks had fought on the side of Cyrus the Younger. Even farther up in the same country, Pliny the Elder gives the name of Arabia to the territory where Carrhæ and Edessa flourished. Nay, more, the northeastern part of Egypt, between the Nile and the Red Sea, namely, all the mountainous region where the quarries of porphyry used by the Pharaohs for their monuments were situated, went by the same name.

The ancients again did not divide Arabia exactly as we do. All the fertile districts of the peninsula, particularly in the south, both on the Red Sea, and on the Indian Ocean, they called *Arabia Felix*. This formed the greater part of it. The extensive deserts which are the main feature of the country in the north, went by the name of *Arabia Deserta*. It is only much more recently that we hear of *Arabia Petraea*. It seems that the geographer Ptolemy was the first who used that expression; but it is graphic, and gives an exact idea of a vast district of the country in the northwest.

This threefold partition is now unanimously adopted by the moderns, with the exception of the Arabs themselves, who know no other geography of the country than the complex division and subdivision of its tribes. Yet for us the three parts of it, as we designate them, have not the same correlation that they had anciently. *Arabia Felix* is now called Yemen, and is far more reduced in extent than it was formerly. In fact, it comprises only that slice of the peninsula, running along the Red Sea from Mecca south as far as the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, and as far in the interior as the extreme fertility of the soil extends. *Arabia Deserta* goes under the name of Hedjaz, and includes the greater part of the whole country, embracing many tracts which are now known to be far from barren and arid. The third division remains about what it was for Ptolemy, who first called it *Arabia Petraea*.

The greatest part of this vast region was inhabited by Semitic tribes. In the northwest the Edomites, children of Isaac, possessed from a very high antiquity the country around Petra, and colonized, no doubt, a large portion of Arabia Petraea. The remainder of the north and center was the dwelling-place of the posterity of Ismael, to whom the *Arabes Scenitæ*, whom we now call Bedouins, belonged. In the south, the children of Jectan or Joctan, the second son of Heber, Semites, consequently, lived in the wealthy district called *Arabia Felix*. Among them, and scarcely to be distinguished, many tribes of African Cushites cultivated that rich soil. The Old Testament does not fail to establish the distinction between these two chief races of Arabia Felix. The Cushites of Asia were evidently connected ethnographically with the Ethiopians of Axum; and thus the history of Arabia confirms the opinion of Rawlinson, and of all the writers who attribute to the Cushite race, not only a great antiquity, but likewise an immense extension, in Africa first, then in Southern Arabia, finally around the Persian Gulf, and in Southern Iran, as far as the mouths of the Indus. The question discussed by some modern writers, Was the original seat of this race Asia or Africa?—that is, had the Cushites passed originally from Asia to Africa, or reciprocally?—seems to be an idle question. Yet the Bollandists appear to incline to the first alternative, without stating their reasons. It is more generally admitted that the primitive seat of the children of Cush was in African Ethiopia, from whence they spread toward the east. The reason is, simply, that it appears certain that, originally, Africa was given as their inheritance

to the children of Ham, and the posterity of Cush formed a very remarkable branch of this family.

These few geographical and ethnographical notions were necessary for the understanding of our main object, namely, the spread of Christianity in that strange Asiatic country. Its look is certainly more that of Africa than of Asia ; and precisely on this account it may be called the natural connection between both.

Until lately it was generally believed that the doctrines of Christ had scarcely ever penetrated in this part of the world, except for a short time on its northwestern borders, in the neighborhood of Palestine ; but lately many discoveries have been made, which lift up, in great part, the vail of mystery thrown over it during so many centuries of Moslem rule. The result is that it is now demonstrated that the Christian religion had very early taken possession of a great part of Arabia, in the south as well as in the north, and would probably have conquered it entirely had it not been checked at once, and soon destroyed, by Mussulman fanaticism.

The first discussion might be confined to the north of the country, and consequently to facts well known from the labors of critics in the seventeenth century down to this, yet better understood in our day, owing to the progress of philology and criticism. A word, however, must, before all, be said of the Magi or wise men, who have been proved lately to have come really from Arabia. In his Commentary on St. Matthew's Gospel, Father F. X. Patrizzi brings forth such an array of erudition on the question, and uses his authorities with such a judgment and skill, that the reader feels convinced not only that the wise men came from Arabia, but actually from the south of it ; in fact, from that part of it which we call the Homerite country, or rather the Himyar region, in Arabia Felix, whose monuments and antiquities have been lately examined by many men of eminence, who have thrown an unexpected light on its early Christianity. There is no doubt that the three men who came from the East, bringing gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the feet of Christ, spoke of him, when they went back, to their astonished countrymen, and proclaimed openly the coming of him who was to be "the light of the Gentiles." But further details on the interesting country where the cassia and the cinnamon grow, sweet perfumes exude from trees and shrubs, and formerly gold was found in abundance, will before long call for our special attention. The present subject, however, regards the forbidding wilderness of sand and rocks, entering as a geographi-

cal wedge between Palestine and Mesopotamia, and protruding its northern sharp point as far up as the road from Antioch to Armenia. This triangular desert, whose basis is the peninsula itself, was for a long time the dividing line between the Roman and the Persian Powers, until the fall of Mithridates in the north of Asia Minor enabled the Romans to enter "the country between the two rivers" from its northern mountainous boundary, and fix for a long time their battle-fields against the East in the plains of Mesopotamia. When this took place, the south of Palestine, occupied by the Romans, was at a great distance from the Lower Tigris and Euphrates, occupied by the Persians. The Arabs dwelt in the arid desert which was interposed between the two great nations ; those on the side of Palestine being generally friendly to Rome, and thus more easily brought to Christ ; the tribes on the side of Mesopotamia remained almost constantly under the influence of the Persian kings.

## 2. *Early Christianity among the Arabs of the Himyar country, or Arabia Felix.*

The chorography detailed in the previous paragraphs renders easy of comprehension the facts which it is now our duty to relate. The Christianization of Arabia began on the day of Pentecost ; and it was still Peter who started it. Strange, indeed ! it must be admitted ; we find him at the origin of the Christian religion everywhere. But it is again the Acts of the Apostles which inform us of it. At the end of the enumeration of the men of all nations who were present at Jerusalem when the Holy Ghost descended upon the apostles of Christ, it is said that "Jews also and proselytes, Cretes and *Arabians*, heard them speak in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. . . . And they were all astonished and wondered. . . . But Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and spoke to them," etc.\* St. John Chrysostom, with his usual precision, remarked it in his homilies on the second chapter of the Acts ; and although the various passages of the eloquent archbishop are scattered through three or four of these homilies, yet they can all be found there tersely expressed : Peter is called by him "the leader of the apostolic choir"—*ο κορυφαῖος τοῦ μακαρίου χοροῦ* ; "he is the first to speak, and the first to draw together a church ; this congre-

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\* Acts, ii. 11, et seq.

gation is not composed only of people of his own nation, but of men of all races ; so that having been established by the Lord the pastor of all, his flock was from the first collected from all." And we read that Arabians were amongst them.

It is from Peter, therefore, that the Arabs heard originally of Christ, and, no doubt, received his doctrine. There is no need of supposing that these new disciples lived at a great distance from Jerusalem. A few miles would bring them east to the Jordan, and crossing this river, they were in their country. Some of them, perhaps the greatest number, must, however, have come from Yemen, at the southwestern end of the peninsula, which a large Jewish population inhabited, from the time probably of Nabuchodonosor the Great. A word was said already on the subject ; more shall presently be known to us of this Hebrew colony.

It is curious to remark, that for a long time, coming down nearly to this, people imagined that Arabia either had not heard the first preaching of the Gospel by the apostles, or had entirely refused to listen to it. This is merely the effect of the devastating fury of Mahometanism, which rooted out so completely the Christian religion from the native country of the sect, that learned men even could suppose the Church had never been planted in the territory contiguous to Palestine, and the nearest south of it. The reader will directly be able to judge how wrong was this strange idea.

But if the first-fruits of the Church in Arabia were due to the Prince of the Apostles, we do not read anywhere that he traveled himself to this country. Even St. Paul, who, directly after his conversion, being forced to fly from Damascus, went straight to the Arabian desert east of the city, had no other object than to live for a few days in retirement, in thankfulness to Christ for opening the eyes of his soul, and revealing himself to him. He cannot, consequently, be called the apostle of this vast country. Who was the one amongst the twelve to whom this mission must be attributed ? There is on this question a vast amount of clashing information in the works of ancient ecclesiastical writers. Thus St. Jude, St. Thomas, St. John the Evangelist, were supposed by some Greek writers to have evangelized this country. But it is now proved to be entirely unfounded. Other apostles and disciples, with more probability, were accredited with the honor of having been the first to preach in Arabia ; and Assemani gives in detail the various opinions

of ancient authors who believed that St. Matthew, St. Matthias, or some of the seventy-two disciples had done so. These various opinions, although less improbable than the first, are, however, rejected now unanimously by the best critics; and it is considered as certain that if the primeval conversion of Arabia was the work of some of the first apostles or disciples, it was due to none of these. The cause of so many errors of fact advanced by writers of repute among the Greeks or Syrians, is easily explained by the imperfect geographical notions prevailing among the ancients. The name of *India* was given, not only to Hindostan itself, but likewise to many countries at a great distance from it, and inhabited by races altogether different from the Hindoos. Particularly the dwelling-places of all Cushite tribes invariably received that appellation. The Ethiopians were always called Indians, whatever country they had colonized; and consequently the region itself where they lived was also called India. Thus the name was given to the valley of the Upper Nile, which, we think, was the original seat of that great race. Actual Abyssinia, as well as modern Yemen or Arabia Felix, went by the same name, because Ethiopians lived there; and as the same race had settled very anciently all along the southern and eastern coast of Arabia, as well as around the Persian Gulf, and Southern Persia, all those countries were supposed to be a part of India. The apostles, therefore, or disciples, who had evangelized any of them, were called indiscriminately Apostles of India. It is only very recently that more correct ideas have begun to prevail, and it is not without a great deal of wrangling among critics that many apparently inextricable difficulties have been cleared up. The Bollandist Fathers have been most zealous in their efforts to bring about this happy result, and in most cases have succeeded most felicitously. In our private opinion, if it is worth anything, they have only failed in comprehending entirely the vast primordial extent, the great power, the real civilization of the primitive Cushite race, on which Geo. Rawlinson throws such light in his notes on Herodotus, and chiefly in his *Five Monarchies*.

But the question remains entire, Who was the apostle who first evangelized Arabia? Being so near Palestine it could not have been forgotten by the first messengers of Christ, and one of the twelve must have devoted his life to it. The Bollandist Fathers again think that it was St. Bartholomew, and this for very powerful and convincing reasons, which ought to be read in the tenth volume of

October.\* A very short and imperfect abstract is the only thing possible in these pages.

First, we know from Eusebius and from St. Jerome that Demetrius, the Patriarch of Alexandria, received a deputation of men from *India*, who came to ask him for some teacher of the Christian religion, which they wished to embrace, or rather to know and practice better. Pantænus was sent, and having reached *India*, he found there in the hands of the people the Gospel of St. Matthew, in Hebrew, which was said to have been carried by St. Bartholomew to that country when he first went to evangelize it. Pantænus, it is sure, brought a copy of that gospel to Alexandria when he came back. The only question is, what *India* was it, to which both he and St. Bartholomew had traveled? St. Jerome thought it was Hindostan itself, and speaks of the *Brachmanes*, to whom Pantænus preached Christianity. But what good would a book written in Hebrew do among a people who spoke and read only Sanskrit? It is, on the contrary, known at present, that Arabia Felix was also called *India*, and the numerous Jews living there, as shall be proved, could very well understand a Hebrew volume. It is consequently very probable that Pantænus and St. Bartholomew before him evangelized Yemen.

Secondly, many ancient writers assign *Arabian India* to St. Bartholomew without any hesitation, as a well-known tradition. Often, when they name *India* alone, the various details of the narrative show that it was not Hindostan, nor Africa, but some other part of Asia, which cannot be other than Arabia. The proofs given by the Bollandists would not perhaps suffice alone to produce a perfect conviction; but they confirm powerfully the whole array of evidence by a solid erudition.

Thirdly, the Homerite—Himyarite—country must have received the light of faith very early indeed; and the preaching of some of the apostles alone can sufficiently explain the strange facts now too well ascertained to be called doubtful. But, as previously stated, of all the apostles Bartholomew is the only one whose mission to Arabia cannot be objected to. The strength of this last proof lies in what is now known of the early spread of Christianity in Yemen. This shall be presently alluded to. But although this part of Arabia is at the extreme point south, there are well-ascertained facts belonging to the

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\* P. 672, et seq.

history of the extreme north of the peninsula which have a powerful bearing on this inquiry, and must be first examined. The question is, How early did several important tribes of the north, which had migrated from the south, become Christian? Can it be proved, or at least is it very probable they had already embraced Christianity before they went north?

To clear up this question, the modern historian is not reduced to the old texts of Greek and Syriac writers who have spoken of the preaching of the Gospel in the north of the country. These are always meager, and it can scarcely be expected that anything new can be deduced from works that have been so long in the hands of critics. Some interesting details, however, may be culled even from these Greek and Syrian authorities, to which sufficient attention has not been paid. But the real interest of the matter lies in many discoveries of recent travelers and Orientalists, who have gone through the country to decipher its inscriptions and gather Arabic MSS. T. Wright, Noel Desvergers, Caussin de Perceval, and others, have by their labors, as well as De Sacy by his erudition, thrown a new light on a subject which had been nearly given up as destined to remain forever obscure. Caussin de Perceval particularly, in his *Essai sur l'Histoire des Arabes avant l'Islamisme*, has deserved well of the friends of truth, much more certainly than T. Wright himself, the celebrated author of a too compendious but very remarkable *History of Early Christianity in Arabia*. The work of this last author is only a short essay, which he had no time afterward to develop; and although very often his facts and views are remarkably correct, and suppose an immense reading, yet he, occasionally, falls into grave errors, as that one of supposing that the Ethiopia evangelized by St. Frumentius was the Arabian Yemen; in fact the Himyarite or Homerite country. Still, when he wrote, all scholars knew that it was the Axumite Ethiopia, what we call now Abyssinia. Caussin de Perceval never commits any blunder of the kind. The only fault with him is not to weigh well enough the importance of the facts he adduces, and either to give to Christianity too narrow an extent in the country, or to imagine that the origin of its spread cannot be anterior to the fourth century. Thus he seems to be convinced that the mission of St. Bartholomew, which he admits, was entirely barren of results; although one hundred and fifty years later the Gospel of St. Matthew was found in the country by Pantænus. He also seems to suppose that the Gospel was preached in Yemen only in the

sixth century, when at that very time he is forced to recognize that several thousand martyrs perished for the faith. He does not appear to have been acquainted with their *Acts*, which prove undeniably that not only those holy martyrs were Christians from their birth, but also their ancestors for a long time before them. This happened in the city of Nedjran, and shall require our attention by and by.

But apart from some inaccuracies of the kind, the author of *L'Histoire des Arabes avant l'Islamisme*, has rendered service to truth by his researches in Arabic MSS.; and he truly deserves credit for the sincere respect he invariably displays when speaking of the Christian religion.

In treating of the Christian Arabs who inhabited the north, both along Palestine in the west, and contiguous to the Euphrates in the east, it is most important to remark that they came from the Himyarite or Homerite country—namely, from Yemen. This is well established by Caussin. The causes of this double migration from south to north are not well known. It may have been, as Caussin thinks, a devastating inundation caused by the breaking of the walls of an immense reservoir, such as were, and are yet, constructed in the Orient for the purpose of irrigation; or it may have been some war among the prosperous tribes of Southern Arabia. The fact of the flooding of the plains around Mareb, then the capital of the Himyar region, is recorded in the manuscript works of Arabic authors, discussed by Caussin. But whatever may have been the cause, it is sure that toward the year 190 of our era, the large and powerful tribe of the Benu-Salih left Yemen and went to settle in Irak-Arabi, not far from the Euphrates, in a country which then acknowledged the rule of Odheina, one of the ancestors of *Septimius Odenatus*, the subsequently celebrated husband of the still more renowned Zenobia, queen of Palmyra. A few years later, about 205, the powerful tribe of the Ghassanides left Central or Southern Arabia to go and dwell in the rocky wilderness southeast of Palestine, near the renowned city of Bostra. The Benu-Salih found themselves drawn gradually under the influence of the Persian kings, then masters of Mesopotamia; and their Arabian city of Hira or Hirta, built in the neighborhood of the ruins of ancient Babylon, became in course of time more or less implicated with the political affairs of the Persian Sassanidæ, chiefly in their wars with Rome. The Ghassanides, on the contrary, living not far from the borders of Palestine, began, as it were, to revolve in the circle of attraction of

the Romans, without, however, being total strangers to their brethren, the Benu-Salih, toward the east, with whom they sometimes went to war. Both evidently were either Joctanites or Cushites, since they came from the south. They could not be of the posterity of Ismael, since they built and inhabited cities. Ismael's children lived under tents, and were called *Arabes Scenitas*; always reluctant to confine themselves within the walls of towns. These remarks are important, on account of their bearing on their practice of the Christian religion. How did they come to embrace it?

The Arabic authors Ibn-Khotaiba, Ibn-Hazm, and Massoud, called usually Massudius, tell us without comment that the Benu-Salih were Christians; they do not say the same of the Ghassanides. The Bollandist Fathers think it means only that the Benu-Salih embraced Christianity at a later period. This, indeed, is matter of surprise. The Arabic authors just named might as well have remarked it also of the Ghassanides, who likewise became Christian posteriorly to their migration near Bostra. Yet they did not; and their remark on the subject applied only to the Benu-Salih; because in our opinion this tribe, alone of the two, were Christians when they went to Irak-Arabi and built the city of Hirta. We think ourselves authorized to believe that they brought their religion with them from the Himyar country, which must consequently have contained a Christian population as early as the year 190 of our era. In the copious extracts of their history known at the present time it is never mentioned that they were converted in Mesopotamia. It would then have been through the instrumentality of the Persian Christians of Seleucia, their near neighbors, and the tradition of this fact would have certainly remained among them.

The Ghassanides, at the time of their migration north, were not Christians; yet according to De Sacy they were originally from the same Himyar region. But this circumstance cannot create any difficulty, because no one pretends that all the Himyarites had then embraced Christianity.

Let us, therefore, look well at this strange region of Arabia Felix, the *Homeritis* of the Greeks, evangelized most probably by St. Bartholomew, certainly visited and regenerated by Pantænus, the first great teacher of the Alexandrian school—a country which became the mother of such martyrs as Arethas, and the holy matron Ruma, with thousands of others; the paradise of Southwestern Arabia, covered still in our day with the ruins of stately palaces and once

glorious churches, although Moslem fanaticism has destroyed as well as it could every vestige of its pristine glory.

T. Wright, in his *Early Christianity in Arabia*, describes in a few gorgeous paragraphs this Eden of the great Arabian peninsula. We refer to his most interesting little volume, should the reader not be willing to peruse the long chapter of the Bollandists on the subject, in which has been collected whatever antiquity ever told us of this country. It was called primitively Saba, and it is certainly from that region that the celebrated queen came to Jerusalem to admire the glory and the wisdom of Solomon. It is said that the name Himyar, which the Greeks translated into *Homeritis*, originated from a son of the Sabean king Abdsjams-Saba, who lived seven hundred years before Christ, and who left two male children, Himyar and Cahlan. One of the descendants of the first, having united in his own person all the Sabean tribes, about a hundred years before our era, the Himyar clan became pre-eminent, and henceforward the name of it was substituted to that of Saba and Sabean.

Their language was not the pure Arabic ; but had a strong flavor of Phœnician, which everybody knows is akin to the Hebrew. Many inscriptions have been found, copied, and brought to Europe by Niebuhr, Wellsted, and Thomas Arnaud. This last traveler carried to France sixty of them, found in the ruins of Mareb alone—the ancient Saba. The characters used differed considerably both from the Phœnician and the Arabic ; but it is not true, as some modern cyclopædias pretend, that "Himyar, who invented this alphabet, was the immediate successor of Saba." No author of repute that we know, ever said that Himyar invented the alphabet which bears his name ; and it is preposterous to make him the immediate successor of Saba, who, according to Genesis, was either the son of Cush, or his grandson, if he was the one enumerated among the children of Regma. The reader can see in the last paragraph who was the father of Himyar, and that he lived in the seventh century before Christ. The origin, therefore, of the Himyaritic alphabet is unknown. But the people that used it was among the most civilized in the highest antiquity ; and the remains of architecture found and described by Arnaud and other travelers prove that not only *Araby the Blest* was one of the most advanced of all agricultural countries, producing cassia, and cinnamon, and aloes, and frankincense, as it produces now the most aromatic coffee in the world ; but that it was also a region inhabited by a wonderful artistic people, who built splendid palaces,

and temples, and private dwelling-houses, of the most durable stones, wonderfully chiseled, and covered with inscriptions yet legible, and giving details of a high civilization.

This was the country from which the Queen of Saba came to Jerusalem, where "she entered with a great train, and riches, and camels that carried spices, and an immense quantity of gold, and precious stones. She came to King Solomon, and spoke to him all that she had in her heart." This was the country likewise where Bartholomew went and carried the Gospel of St. Matthew, written in Hebrew, which was found in the country more than a century and a half afterward, and brought to Alexandria.

From inscriptions dug out of the ruins of Saba or Mareb, several kings of Arabia Felix have lately become well known ; and comparing the facts recorded on the monuments with many passages of Greek writers and of Arabic authors, the silence of the inscriptions with regard to the religion of those rulers becomes at once very suggestive, and enables the reader of both records to come to a proper understanding of the whole subject. It is mostly on the strength of this silence that Caussin de Perceval thinks Christianity had not really penetrated into the Himyar region before the sixth century. Occasionally the same author carries his scruples farther than the rules of a reasonable criticism will allow, when some of these inscriptions present a slight appearance of polytheism. He attributes directly to pagan times what Greek authors prove to have been the work of Christian rulers. We have here two different causes of error, which must be illustrated by some examples.

Among the remains of Arabian epigraphy brought to Europe by Cruttendon, and later on in a better shape by Arnaud, is found the following remarkable one : "Abd-Kelal and his wife had given me" (the name is absent) "the right to use this temple, and his sons now pass over the property of it to me. They have confirmed their donation by oath"—literally "by the invocation of God"—"May their house continue to enjoy Fortune's gifts by the help of the gods." Mr. Caussin, of course, is sure that Abd-Kelal was a pagan as well as his sons, when this transaction took place, and consequently the temple was handed over to some pagan priest whose name, unfortunately, is not on the monument. Yet we are struck with the following strange facts : Hamza, an Arabic author quoted by Schultens (*Imper. Joctan.*), states positively that Abd-Kelal, the son of Mathub, who ruled over Himyar from 273 to 297 of our era—remark this

well—"had embraced the religion of Christ, yet concealed the fact, and did not profess openly his faith." This is confirmed by Ibn-Khaldun and several others, who do not hesitate to say "that it was a Syrian who had converted Abd-Kelal; but as the Himyarites were pagans at the time, they rebelled, it is said, and put to death the Syrian who had made him renounce his idols."

More strange still: Marthad, called by Schultens and De Sacy Morthid, the very son of Abd-Kelal, was so little frightened by this rebellion of the Himyarites during his father's reign, that when Constantius sent him Theophilus, called "the Indian," as an ambassador, to induce him not only to allow the Romans dwelling in Arabia Felix to practice openly their religion, but even to allow Christian missionaries to preach to his subjects and to build temples for them; the king not only consented, but he himself employed the money of the State to build three magnificent churches; although Constantius had given to Theophilus large sums to be employed for the same purpose. This mission will require directly a more particular attention: but from the facts just recorded it is allowable to conclude that Abd-Kelal was a true Christian, that the pretended rebellion of his subjects did not in truth amount to much, but was at most a local tumult, in which the Syrian missionary may have lost his life; that Marthad, after his father, professed himself the Christian religion; and finally, that the epigraph quoted above does not necessarily suppose that the king was then pagan and the temple given for an idolatrous worship. When it speaks of an oath "by the invocation of God"—*invocatione Divinitatis*—it assumes already a monotheistic, or rather, Christian, language. What is said subsequently of "the help of the gods" can very well be understood of the angels and saints whose worship has always been recognized by the Church of God, and was most prevalent very early in the Orient. It was, in fact, often the language of the Vedas.

This, we confess, may appear improbable to some. If so, it may be hinted that the language of the inscription was possibly a part of the policy of Abd-Kelal, who did not dare "to profess openly his faith"—an example which his son Marthad may have followed at the beginning of his reign. But it can, at least, be successfully maintained that the coming of Theophilus in Arabia Felix was an epoch of open profession of Christianity in the country; and on that account what Philostorgius wrote of it is important; for he was a contemporary writer, and his Arianism has no bearing on the case.

Let the reader remark that instead of the sixth century, assigned by most recent writers for the introduction of Christianity in the Himyar country, the middle of the fourth is the subject of the present researches. The testimony of the Greek writer is so full, and agrees so well with both Himyarite inscriptions and Arabic MSS., that we wonder any one should speak yet of the sixth century, in the face of such positive records. We will later on come up to a higher period in time; but the matter, being obscure, must be cleared up gradually.

Theophilus, the "Indian," was born in Socotra, an African island in the Indian Ocean, settled by Greeks, as the Bollandists prove abundantly against Létronne, who pretends that his native country was an island in the Red Sea. He was ordained deacon in Palestine by Eusebius of Cæsarea; but was made a bishop previous to his Arabian mission. As a present from Constantius he carried to the Himyarite king—Marthad—two hundred spirited Cappadocian horses, and was himself intrusted by the emperor with large sums of money to be employed in building churches. According to Philostorgius there were in the country many Jews—this will soon be proved perfectly correct—and "the people sacrificed also to the sun, the moon, and the national gods"—*diis indigenis*. If the Greek writer pretends to say that there were no Christians whatever in the country before the mission of Theophilus, he was certainly in error; but it is true that there were then pagans in Yemen, as will appear from the martyrdom of St. Arethas or Arith, and his companions.

Philostorgius is positive that Theophilus endeared himself to the Sabeans or Himyarites, so that the Jews had to conceal their impotent rage, and allow him without hindrance to spread the faith among the people. He succeeded so completely in his mission that "the king himself embraced a life of true piety with a sincere mind, and built three churches, not out of the money which the ambassador had brought with him, but out of funds which he supplied himself from his treasury; as he wished to show a generosity of soul as great as the preaching of Theophilus was eminent." We merely translate the Latin version of Philostorgius, quoted by the Bollandist Fathers. The three churches built by Marthad were situated, the first in *Tapharon*, namely, the place called now Dhafar or Zaphar; the second in *Adane*, namely Aden, at the mouth of the Red Sea; and the third one, "in another part of the country, where there is a renowned emporium of the Persians, at the mouth of the Persian

Gulf." Assemani says it must be Ormuz, and there can be no doubt of it; but this circumstance shows the extent of the Himyarite kingdom at the time.

This narrative of Philostorgius is said not to agree with several statements of Arabic authors, at least with respect to the conversion of the king. It is certain that those authors native to the country *do not mention* that Marthad was Christian, and only say, that he was tolerant, and allowed all his subjects to worship God as they pleased, provided they kept the laws of the empire. This is far from a denial of the contrary statement of the Greek writer. One thing is sure, that the profession of Christianity was public and openly tolerated under the reign of Marthad. More yet; Thaleb, in an Arabic work called *Tabacatel-moluk*, says that the son of Marthad, Wakia by name, after having professed Judaism, became openly a Christian, and ended his life by vacillation and hesitancy.

The truth seems to be that the country was at the time unsettled. We know from the inscription of Ela-San at Axum that the kings of African Ethiopia, at this very moment, claimed authority over at least a part of Himyar. But whatever may have been the case with respect to the kings, the Christians could practice their religion, and there is nothing opposed to the belief that they were then numerous in the country.

It is known from the history of Ela-San or Aizanas, recorded formerly, and particularly from the Axumite inscription on which we commented a few pages back, that the Himyarite country, or at least a part of it, had been conquered by the Ethiopian king, and that St. Frumentius directly after evangelized all the subjects of Aizanas, not only those of Africa, but likewise of Arabia, since he became the apostle of all Ethiopians under the rule of Axum. It is very unfortunate that we have no details of the labors of the good Salama, whose life is given in such general terms in the authentic documents which we possess, that no particularities can be known of the countries and the people he visited. If special records of his apostleship had been preserved, we would know more precisely what was the kind of Christianity which prevailed in Himyar before Athanasius sent him to Ethiopia, and what he did to develop the germs of virtue and religion which existed there before him. For it is certain that such germs sprung up in Arabia previously to their expansion in Abyssinia, on the other side of the Red Sea; and we must for a moment examine if it is not possible to go even higher

up than the reign of Abd-Kelal, between 270 and 297 of our era, to find them. What probability is there that the labors of Bartholomew, at the very origin, and those of Pantænus a hundred and fifty years later, had not entirely dwindled into nothingness in 270, that is, about one hundred years after the Alexandrian catchetist had labored in that highly civilized country?

It was indeed a civilized country, as was seen; and it may be doubted if there was then any other spot on earth where agriculture was more perfect, and the arts carried on to a higher degree of development. All the travelers who have lately visited it, and contemplated the ruins of its greatness; all the Orientalists who have been able to decipher the precious fragments that remain of its Arabic, Himyaritic, and Hebrew literature, are unanimous on the subject. At the time of the legation of Theophilus, sent by Constantius to Marthad, there were in the country many Roman subjects, for whom the Emperor of Constantinople asked that churches should be built. This must have been the case for a long time previous. When Demetrius was Patriarch of Alexandria, toward the middle of the second century, it must have been so to some extent; otherwise how could those *Indians* of Yemen have known where to send their deputation, in order to obtain a proper Christian teacher for the native population? A sure sign that this population was not savage, but really civilized, was the choice made by the patriarch of the great Pantænus, for that distant mission. A holy and zealous man, without great science and much refinement, would have been the proper person for a tribe of simple, unsophisticated, and rude people. But for the *Indians* of *Arabia Felix*, an apostle, not only full of love for God, and the souls of men, was needed, but likewise, learned, able to lead in the right path an educated and art-loving nation, and to shine by his dignified manners, among the inhabitants of a polished country. Thus, the man who was destined later on to shed a new splendor on the Alexandrian school, and prepare the way for Clement and Origen, was chosen to go as far as the very end of the Red Sea, and continue, by his labors, the work originally commenced by one of the twelve. He found the identical Hebrew Testament of St. Matthew, carried there by Bartholomew a hundred and fifty years before. The numerous Hebrews of the country had not been, and were not destined to be, all converted by Pantænus. The prophecies of Isaias on the perverseness of this nation were to be fulfilled

in Arabia Felix, as they had been in Judea and elsewhere. Yet who knows how many of them acknowledged Christ, whom their countrymen had crucified, and formed in that country the nucleus of Christian churches, as they did all over the Roman world?

But independently of Christian Jews and natives who may have been converted by the first apostle of the nation—Bartholomew himself—or at least by Pantænus; independently of the Syrian martyr who induced Abd-Kelal at the end of the third century to renounce the worship of idols; several Arabic MSS.—some of them the work of Mahometans—relate with many wonderful circumstances another fact whose date is variously determined by various authors and critics of our day, and which may very well be brought up to a far higher epoch than the middle of the fifth century, advocated by the Bollandist Fathers. It is the conversion of the whole city of Nedjran in Arabia Felix, by another Syrian, called in all those old chronicles *Faymiyun*. Many of the circumstances related by the chroniclers are evidently fabulous, but so great a number of Arabic MSS. of different age, and of altogether different source, agree in attributing the evangelization of Nedjran to a Syrian *Apostle* of the name of *Faymiyun*, or something approaching to it, that the fact itself cannot be denied. The date of the event, however, is so obscure that the most modern and exact critics—Caussin, De Sacy, Walch, the Bollandist Fathers, and others—all differ in their interpretation. The authors of the *Acta Sanctorum* think the only proper means of deciding the question is found in the narrative of the martyrdom of St. Arethas and his companions, which supposes that at their death, in 533, the citizens of Nedjran had professed Christianity for a very long time; and we are decidedly of their opinion. A hundred years or so, however, seem to them sufficient, so that the mission of Faymiyun would have taken place toward the middle of the fifth century. When we shall speak of that glorious death of several thousand Christians, something may be said more pointedly on the subject; but the only remark which naturally comes to the mind, and must suffice at the present moment, is this: The Christians of Nedjran in 533 belonged to a Church established in that city for so long a time that Faymiyun, who preached the Gospel to them, may very well, for anything we know, have come to the country in the first ages of Christianity. In fact, in the work, *Tarikh-al-moluk*, which gives the legend in full, and which D'Herbelot calls *Tarikh-al-Tabari*, the writer says of Faymiyun that he was *ex genere apostolorum Jesu*.

These significant words are taken from the Latin version of the book whose Arabic title has been just given ; and from it no date whatever can be ascertained, and Faymiyun might be St. Bartholomew himself, or Pantænus, or any other you choose. Another version of the same story by Ibn-Ishak, in a book called *Sirat-errasul*, gives many marvelous details, some of which indeed can become the basis of a precise date ; and it is, in fact, from it that the modern critics have tried to establish an epoch on which, however, they all fall to wrangling. From the parts of the story given in the *Acta Sanctorum* we would feel inclined to reject at once the whole absurd narrative, with the date, consequently ; whilst the few passages of it quoted in the work called *Tarikh-al-moluk* predispose the reader, on the contrary, in its favor by the simplicity of the story, and by having all its circumstances completely in harmony with the manners of the age and the peculiarities of the country. All that can be said, therefore, without possible contradiction, is that the holy man who established Christianity in Nedjran came from Syria, and was one *ex genere apostolorum Jesu* ; both circumstances belonging certainly to St. Bartholomew—a very curious and remarkable peculiarity ! The truth seems to be that the researches on the origin of the Christian religion in Arabia are so recent, and have been so far carried on on so narrow a scale with respect to monuments and books, that some more time will be required to form a perfectly correct idea of the proper dates. From the little that is known, however, it may be justly inferred that a part of the peninsula was, at a very early epoch, in a fair way of being converted to Christ.

We will be more convinced of this if we return for a short time to the north of the country, which, without the possibility of any doubt, was *entirely* Christianized as early as the beginning of the fifth century.

### 3. *Origin of Christianity in Northern Arabia.*

It was from the Himyar region, in Arabia Felix, that, before the end of the second age of our era, the Benu-Salih migrated north, whatever may have been the cause that induced them to leave their country. They settled in Irak-Arabi, not far from the Euphrates and the ruins of old Babylon, where they built the city of Hira or Hirta, in the neighborhood of the Persians, then masters of Mesopotamia. At the same time the Ghassanides had left the interior of

Arabia—some say Homeritis likewise—and settled in Arabia Petrea, in the neighborhood of the Romans, who then occupied Palestine; their center was the renowned city of Bostra.

The chronicles quoted anteriorly state that the Benu-Salih were Christians, without mentioning the same fact of the Ghassanides. A word was just said of the opinion advocated, on the subject, by the authors of the *Acta Sanctorum*, chiefly based on the belief that at the time of the migration of the Benu-Salih, Himyar, their native country, had not yet received the Gospel, and that consequently they became Christians only in their new settlement. But the contrary opinion, in the actual state of Oriental knowledge, may very well be maintained; and in this case the Christianity of Northern Arabia would be connected with that of the south. Thus all the progress of the religion of Christ, in the country, would have radiated from Arabia Felix, from old Saba, the seat of the great Cushite race in Arabia, the paradise of all Asia itself; out of which the wise men had traveled to Jerusalem to worship Christ, and to which Bartholomew carried the Gospel, which alone speaks of them.\*

Whatever may be thought of these conjectures, a new starting center of conversion was found for both Benu-Salih and Ghassanides, soon after their settlement in the North. This requires some development.

The Benu-Salih had first migrated from Tehama in Yemen to Irak-Arabi, in 190. Those who do not think they were yet Christians, admit, nevertheless, that finding themselves so near Southern Mesopotamia, where Assemani has proved, from irrefragable Greek, Syriac, and Arabic documents, that Christianity already flourished, it must be at least certain that in their new city of Hirta they heard of Christ long before 288, the date, when later, Mahometan writers pretend that their king Imrulcays first received the Gospel. It was, therefore, early in the third century that they openly professed Christianity; even should some one yet maintain that they were pagans at the time of their migration, and did not bring Christianity with them, but received it only from the Persian Church. In our opinion, since Ibn-Khotaiba, Ibn-Hazm, and other Arabic authors, in giving the history of this tribe, and speaking of their settlement in

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\* Who knows if it were not purposely, with the certainty of finding some one of the three *Magi* yet alive, that the Gospel of St. Matthew, where the fact of their long travels, forward and back, is recorded at length, was carried by the apostle destined to preach Christianity to their countrymen?

Irak-Arabi, in 190, merely say that “they were Christians,” it must be concluded that this was the fact when they left the Himyar country, although, perhaps, their chieftain or king was still pagan. The language of the various Arabic chronicles on the subject of their religion is hesitating and inconsistent. The reader must not be surprised at it; for it is known that Moslem authors attached very little importance to the history and annals of Christian nations and tribes, for which they felt and often expressed the greatest contempt. But in the midst of these hesitations, one thing remains absolutely certain, namely, that the Arabs who settled in the neighborhood of the Euphrates, became very soon not only Christians but Catholics. For it is sure that they went to Irak-Arabi in 190; the most strict critics of our age concede them to have heard of the Gospel, and embraced it shortly after their settlement, that is, early in the third century; and finally, Mahometan authors believe that their king Imrulcays embraced Christianity in 288. From all these facts it strictly follows—and the conclusion would have been unexpected a few years ago—that their religion could not be tainted at the time with any of the heresies which swarmed later on in the East. Neither Arianism, therefore, nor Nestorianism, nor monophysism, could form any part of their creed, during several centuries.

We even possess precious details of their ecclesiastical life in the fourth century, which show them to have been sharers in the persecutions of the Sassanidæ. Hirta, their capital, being only thirty hours' distance from Seleucia, placed them in dependence as Christians on the archbishops of this city, and as private men on the kings of Persia. After the terrible persecution of Sapor II., all the churches of that country being yet Catholic, when Ardasjir, called by the Byzantine writers Artaxerxes, suspended the edicts of his predecessor, and left the Christians in peace, Tamuza or Tomarsa became archbishop of Selencia, in 363. Under the Catholic administration of this prelate, Abdas Dorkenensis built and founded the monastery of Saliba, among the Benu-Salih; and his disciple Ebed-jesu, another convent in the city of Hirta itself. The same Abdas evangelized the Arabs south of Irak-Arabi, and the inhabitants of Matotha and Mesena, an island in the Persian Gulf, near the city of Bassora. In this celebrated island, Dair-Meherak was consecrated bishop by the metropolitan Tamuza; and thus the Catholic Church extended more and more in those burning regions the mildness of her sway.

Assemani proves the existence of many bishops' sees, at the same epoch, in Southern Mesopotamia ; and mentions several synods presided over by Maruthas, bishop of Tekrit, either at Seleucia or Ctesiphon.

The orthodox rule, therefore, prevailed among the Benu-Salih until the sixth century, when the archbishops of Seleucia having embraced Nestorianism, gradually introduced that heresy in all the countries over which their jurisdiction was recognized. Thus the Arabs of the northeastern part of the peninsula became Nestorians only after having professed Catholicism during three or four hundred years. Later on they were led away, perhaps by the leanings of their race and by the pressure of the Moslem Arabs, to embrace Mahometanism.

Turn we to the Ghassanides, it is a still clearer proof of early Christianity in Arabia, leading to the same conclusion. They had migrated to the neighborhood of Bostra, near the borders of Palestine, about 205, and found Christianity flourishing all around them. The Benu-Salih of the east had already spread from Hirta across the desert to the limits of the country the Ghassanides wished to occupy ; and there was at first between them a contest for the possession of the same territory. But the newly-arrived prevailed in war against the eastern colonists, and the victorious Ghassanides received from the Romans, then masters of Palestine, the *phylarchia*, as it was called, over all the Arabs of the neighborhood. Abulfeda and Hamza of Ispahan relate that Djafna was the first *phylarchos* of the Ghassanides, and that his government continued from 205 to his death in 248, when Amru, his son, succeeded him. Amru exercised authority over his tribe until about 300, when his son Thalaba came after him. The same authors—Abulfeda and Hamza—say openly that those three rulers were Christian, and founded monasteries in Syria. The authors of the *Acta Sanctorum* find it difficult to believe, both on account of the persecutions then raging in the Roman world, and because the three Arab rulers would scarcely have founded monasteries so soon after the conversion of their tribe, without the fact coming to the knowledge of Eusebius of Cæsarea and of the various Syrian writers of the same age who do not speak of it. These reasons cannot convince us ; the first, because it is generally when the faith is newly planted in a country that the zeal to build churches and found monasteries is most ardent ; and the persecutors of Palestine would scarcely have dared—had they had the power—to

execute the edicts of the emperors in the Arabian desert, against tribes almost independent and altogether composed of Christians. The second, because it is merely a negative proof, and Eusebius was not bound to know all that happened in the wilds of Arabia Petræa ; and in point of fact he does not seem to have been acquainted at all with the people of which we speak. There cannot be, at least, any doubt that from the conversion of Constantine the princes who ruled over this people embraced Christianity openly and continued faithful to orthodoxy, until they were overpowered by the Mussulmans in the sixth century, and had to succumb to Moslem rule.

The history of Origen proves that the country occupied in 205 by the Ghassan tribe had been very early Christianized. Bostra, called by Ammian Marcellinus "a great city of Arabia," as well as Gerasa and Philadelphia, had bishops from the beginning of the third century, if not earlier. Beryllus was one of them. According to Eusebius of Cæsarea, "he first honored his dignity by his virtues and his learning, and the Church was enriched by his letters, his powerfully-written works, and the various monuments of a bright genius which he left." But he afterward fell into grievous errors, going so far as to deny the personal divinity of Christ ; pretending, like many so-called Christian preachers of our day, that "in Him resided only an influx of the Father's Godhead." Many of his brethren in the episcopate endeavored to convert him to more orthodox opinions ; but not meeting with success, they called to their aid Origen, who convinced him of his errors, and brought him back to Catholic truth. In the time of Eusebius the written discussion between the great Alexandrian doctor and Beryllus, and the acts of the synod convoked on the occasion, existed still ; and the whole transaction proves that in this part of the Arabian Church, at least, there was a high level of intellect, developed by a deep study of theology.

On two other different occasions Origen was again called to Arabia to discuss with its bishops Christian dogmas, and intricate questions of divinity. Several councils were held about the same time to condemn various vagaries of metaphysics and philosophical speculation ; and, besides Beryllus, the same city of Bostra counted among its bishops Titus, celebrated in the whole Church, whose great work against the Manichees has been lately re-discovered ; and Antipater, whose genius can be appreciated by the fragments which remain of his writings.

It was in the midst of a people thus endowed with a great mental ac-

tivity and deep-seated religion, that the Ghassan tribe came to dwell, and drink of the pure waters of Christian truth. And it cannot be supposed that they were a wild nomad troop of Ösbegs, rushing along the desert, and intent only on disturbing the peaceful pursuits of learned bishops. The Himyarite Arabs to whom the Ghassanides belonged, came from a very civilized country, and were an extremely intelligent people. They had nothing in common with the *Arabes Scenita*, or *Bedouins*—those children of Ismael, impetuous rovers of the wilderness—although even these cannot be placed on a level with Tartars or Cossacks; and their deep traditional spirit always invites respect from their European visitors. But the southern Arabs belong really to a far more intellectual type, and were much more fit to receive Christianity and keep it steadfastly in spite of the greatest obstacles.

As was seen previously, it was at least from the very beginning of the fourth century, if not earlier, that they became a thoroughly Christian people. At the Council of Nice, one hundred and fifty years after the birth of Origen, we find among the subscribing bishops, Nicomachus of Bostra, Cyrion of Philadelphia, Gennadius of Hesbon, Severus of Dionysias, Chilon of Constantia; all Christian sees situated in the country of the Ghassanides. The bishops Magnus of Damascus, Anatolius of Emesa, and Marinus of Palmyra, extended likewise their jurisdiction over the surrounding desert, and subscribed the decrees of Nice, as well as Peter, bishop of Aila, a city of Palestine altogether Arabic in population and customs. Thus had already the Church spread in those arid and sandy deserts.

It is easy to perceive by the general history of the period, that the Ghassanides formed then a very extensive and powerful tribe. This appeared chiefly under Valens, about the year 372, when they rebelled against their Roman masters for reasons not very well known. They placed at their head a woman, Mavvia, who has not become so celebrated in history as Zenobia, yet succeeded better in her undertakings than the great queen of the northern wilderness. Mavvia, at the head of her native troops, defeated all the Roman generals sent against her; and after several glorious campaigns, she saw her enemies at her feet suing for peace. This she refused to grant, unless a monk by the name of Moses, a Saracen by birth, but a holy man, an anchorite by profession, was consecrated bishop especially for the Arabs of the country. Such a strange request as this, when there were so many bishops in the country occupied by the Ghassanides,

shows that there had been previous complaints on the part of the Arabs with respect to the ministration of religion among them. The authority of so many Greek bishops, who had the exclusive right of sending them priests, and regulating their Church affairs, was perhaps considered by them as not sufficiently paternal and disinterested ; and they wished to see at their head, as ecclesiastical superior, a man born among them, of the same blood, and imbued with the same traditions and leanings. This is, of course, merely conjectural ; yet it looks natural and probable, when the startling fact is recorded by history of a large number of Arabs, Christians for several centuries, until that time under the rule of a dozen different Greek bishops, asking one of Arabic descent, consecrated exclusively for them, and exercising jurisdiction over them, whatever might be their place of domicile, or resort.

At any rate their petition was not denied, and could not be. Moses was placed at their head as their spiritual superior ; and from the desert where he had formerly led a solitary life, he came forth to spread light and warmth by his virtues and admonitions over a numerous people. We do not read that a city was appointed for his habitual residence. All the towns around were already occupied by Christian bishops ; and it seemed proper that Arabs, who for the greatest number wandered often from place to place, should have chosen for them a pastor who would follow the same shifting kind of life, and accompany them in their frequent migrations.

There is no need of carrying down farther the history of the Ghassanides. It is generally admitted that they continued faithful to their religion until the Moslem invasions. Their princes continued likewise to profess Christianity ; and many of them founded monasteries and other establishments rooted in the soil. This peculiarity proved they were not nomads by nature, and belonged to a race different from the *Arabes Scenite*, although from the neighborhood of these in the north, they acquired something of their wandering disposition. But Caussin de Perceval, in particular, proves that certainly after the reign of Mavvia over them, they remained steadfast in Christian faith and practice.

So far our inquiries have been limited to the Arabs belonging to the Joctanide and Cushite races. These, it is known, occupied the southern half of the peninsula, chiefly the Himyar region. It was the posterity of Joctan, a son of Heber, that had first colonized the country, and among them, for many ages, the Ethiopian or Cushite

family lived and prospered in that terrestrial paradise. Out of this center both the Benu-Salih and the Ghassanides had gone north, and occupied the territory contiguous to the Euphrates and the Persian Gulf on the one side, and to Palestine and the north of Egypt, on the other. All these people, or the greatest part of them, became Christians by the process just discussed and explained. There remains to be looked into the vast country in the north and interior of Arabia ; inhabited from the time of Abraham down to our own by the posterity of Ismael, his son by Agar ; and likewise the much less extensive district lying along the Red Sea, and embracing particularly the cities of Medina and Mecca, destined to be the fatal center out of which the pernicious delusion of Mussulmanism was to arise. A word only on this subject is possible.

*4. The same among the Arabes Scenitæ or Bedouins—St. Simeon Stylites.*

The posterity of Ismael, roaming wild over the arid wilderness of *Arabia Deserta*, seemed to be particularly unfit to receive the Christian dogmas and morality. It is a sad but universal fact that the tribes which are by nature of an entirely roving disposition, can scarcely be persuaded to accept the message of love and brotherhood brought to man by the Son of God. Grace, of course, can overcome all obstacles ; and many individuals belonging to nomadic nations have lived and died faithful to the precepts of Christ, and remained on earth true children of his Church. But how difficult is the task of entirely converting a single tribe of them, and of planting among them the true religion, so that they remain forever after faithful to it ! Arabs as well as Tartars ; Turks as well as American Indians ; men of all branches of the human family, when once they have adopted a roving life, seem perfectly incapable of Christian habits and moral virtue. The missionary among them must first endeavor to make them renounce their innate vagrancy, and embrace a life of steady habits, by devoting themselves to agriculture, industry, or the arts of peace ; and after a long training in these tranquil pursuits, he may hope to succeed in making true Christians of them. It is on this account much more easy to convert a negro than a Kirghees, because the first cannot be, and the second must be, a pure nomad. But above all, how could the children of Ismael submit to a religion of love, of whom it had been said by an angel of the Lord : “ His

hand will be against all men, and all men's hands against him : and he shall pitch his tents over against all his brethren" ? Yet the prodigy was performed, and an immense multitude of those people we now call *Bedouins* embraced Christianity with all the marks of a sincere conversion. This happened in the fourth and fifth centuries of our era.

St. Hilarion seems to have been the first apostle of those children of the desert. He converted a great number of them in the arid country between Palestine and Egypt, the very wilderness in which the Hebrews wandered during forty years. In his life, by St. Jerome, it is said that having founded many monasteries, he often traveled accompanied by a multitude of monks. One day, after crossing the desert of Cadesberne, as he was approaching Elusa or Elusium—probably an Arab encampment—he met many Saracens accompanied by their wives and children. It was a day of solemnity ; and they were walking in procession toward a temple of *Venus*, whom they venerated on account of the *morning star*—*ob Luciferum*—to whose worship the Arabs of the desert were then addicted. At the sight of Hilarion, all those poor pagans, remembering how many of their own nation had been freed from the possession of the Evil Spirit by the holy man, came to him in crowds, and bowing their heads they cried out in Syriac, no doubt to be understood by him : *Barech, Bless us.* Hilarion, receiving them with kindness, begged of them to worship God rather than stones—their goddess was probably, like the Cybele of Phrygia, a conical rough stone—at the same time he shed tears over them, and promised them that if they believed in Christ he would often come to see them. "Admirable goodness of God," exclaims St. Jerome, "Hilarion did not allow them to depart, before he had laid with them the foundations of a church, and their priest, with the sacerdotal fillet still around his head, had received the sign of Christ."

This is generally the way rude people are converted and become Christians ; and we see at once in this description that the flock gathered in the Church's fold by Hilarion were of a very different character from the Ghassan tribe, living in the midst of polished congregations, over which presided such bishops as Beryllus, Titus, Antipater, and the others, who sat under Osius in the Nicene Council.

The same spectacle was witnessed a few years later, in the fifth century, when Euthymius and Simeon Stylites brought to the feet

of Christ, in a much larger number still, the populous tribes of the vast Syrian desert. This great figure of the Oriental monasticism, "Simeon on the pillar," has been totally misconceived by many Protestant writers. This is the natural occasion to render it its native dignity, and to reduce to their proper value all the abusive epithets prodigally bestowed on that wonderful man by those who could not understand him, nor his work.

He was born of poor parents, and at first led the life of a shepherd. So ignorant was he even of the Christian religion in which he was born, that when thirteen years old, hearing in a church that "man ought to fear God with all his heart," he asked what it was to fear God? Being admitted into a monastery near Antioch, he learned by heart the whole Psalter in four months; and found in the divine effusions of holy David the food his soul craved, and the burning zeal for his sanctification and that of others which continued without interruption during a long and most austere life.

This life has appeared unnatural and contemptible to men who did not even look for an explanation of it, if there was one. Is it not absurd, they say, on the face of it, and without going to the trouble of an inquiry, to spend forty years on the top of a pillar, in the presence of a rabble, composed of the lowest of mankind? This is, indeed, an easy condemnation, but justice seems to require that at least the motives for such strange conduct as this, and the result of it, should be first examined into. Perhaps the absurdity would then disappear; and the conversion of a large nation might be considered as a sufficient excuse for what seems otherwise to be pure folly. Why did Simeon dwell for so long a time on the top of a pillar? Could he not converse with men, walking or sitting, as Socrates did in Athens, and our blessed Lord in Judea? But the answer to this simple question may be perfectly satisfactory as to the eccentricity of his proceedings. It is this: He could not choose any other way of addressing the people, owing to the peculiar circumstances of time and place; and thus he did not do it merely for the sake of "making a sensation," and striking the eyes of the ignorant at the risk of creating disgust in the mind and heart of refined people. He had to do it simply and absolutely.

The part of Syria where he dwelt was not far from the borders of the desert; and the rumor of his extraordinary virtue spreading far and wide in those immense regions, the nomads who swarmed around Emesa, and Chalcis, and Palmyra, began to move, and rush

toward the spot where the holy man could be seen and heard. Theodoretus, who was a contemporary writer, and went himself with the others, has described graphically the scenes which were every day enacted ; and Theodoretus is a very respectable author. "The Ismaelites," he says, "arrived every day in troops of two hundred, three hundred, occasionally a thousand, abjuring the erroneous doctrines in which they were born, breaking to pieces their idols, renouncing their former initiation into the orgies of Astarte ; and asking to be admitted to the participation in the divine mysteries of Christ. . . . We have seen and heard them in the very act of forsaking their ancestral superstitions, and swearing to remain faithful to the doctrines of the Gospel."

The holy man was thus every day and at every hour of the day surrounded by troops of ardent proselytes, against whose strange affection he had to protect himself by having a pillar erected, on which he might be safe from their importune admiration, and yet continue to labor for their conversion. That this motive was real, unaffected, and perfectly sincere, Theodoretus furnishes a proof to which sufficient attention has not been given. In the visit that he paid to Simeon he says that he himself ran the greatest danger : "The holy man ordered those Saracens who surrounded him to come to me, and ask my priestly blessing. Directly all that savage rabble rushed at once on me, some in front, some from behind, others on both sides ; those near me grasped me as if they wished to tear me to pieces ; those at a distance tried to reach me over the shoulders of their neighbors ; all stretched their hands toward me, or plucked their beards, or rent their garments. They would certainly have smothered me and killed me, if Simeon by his cries had not obliged them to desist."

This graphic passage shows that "the man on the pillar" had chosen that position through sheer necessity. The *Bedouins* to whom he preached were not the refined and polite citizens of Athens with whom Socrates conversed, nor even the ordinarily grave and sedate Hebrews to whom our blessed Lord addressed his exhortations. Simeon, who thought at first that a simple pillar a few feet high would suffice, soon found his mistake ; he had gradually to increase the height of it, until he came to build one of forty cubits ; and even in this last case he had to surround it with a large yard inclosed within a wall, in order to prevent women coming too near the place where he stood.

This was indeed a novel mode of preaching ; but it was perfectly well adapted to the wilderness where it took place, and to the uncouth nomadic tribes who were to be benefited by it. Another proof of their wild manners is furnished by Theodoretus (quoted by the Bollandists) in a short narrative, where two hostile clans of Saracens are represented claiming, each of them, the blessing of Simeon for their chieftain, to the exclusion of the other. They had already come to blows, and would have ended by the shedding of blood, if the holy man had not showered upon them epithets, necessary for the occasion, but which we prefer not to repeat. The Greek writer was present at the scene, and had tried first to pacify them, by saying they could wait patiently, and both their head men would receive the blessing they craved. But his exhortations proved worse than useless, and inflamed their rage instead of calming it, until the stentorian voice of the great preacher brought them to their senses by his zealous vituperations.

It is evident that such people, to be moved effectually, and to be converted to the mild and sweet manners of Christianity, required the strong spectacle of a virtue at once superhuman, and dictated by the most sublime spirit of sacrifice. The life of Simeon, consequently, had to be such as to powerfully strike them by its austere, and, at the same time, perfectly unselfish character. The very details, therefore, which shock the fastidious modern writers, were the best calculated to act upon the mind and heart of the rude children of Ismael. Fasting, chastising the body, living altogether among them and for them, was the only way of reaching their inmost soul, and impressing upon them the sacredness of the new doctrine they heard.

Yet Simeon did not gain to himself only the admiration of the rabble. All classes of people, not excepting the most exalted in rank, and refined in manners, shared in the common feeling of wonder, and pious amazement. The Emperor Theodosius the Younger, often asked his advice and followed it. Leo, who succeeded to Marcian, the husband of Pulcheria, wrote to him on State and Church affairs. Marcian, it is said, traveled incognito, as far as the desert where Simeon dwelt, to see with his own eyes what was reported of him. Even the king of Persia, Varanes, and his queen, gave him public marks of their respect. He was not, however, without contraditors ; and in his own time, according to Theodoretus, his pillar was occasionally ridiculed by some *men of*

wit, such as are always found in an over-polished community ; but the bishop of Cyr, Theodoreetus, begged of them "to put a guard on their tongue, and not to let it wag inconsiderately, because, frequently, God makes use of such extraordinary proceedings as were those of Simeon, for the good and profit of the lukewarm and the ignorant."

The fact is, that the astonishing results of such a life must at least make the sneerer hesitate, and reflect a moment, on the folly of ridiculing anything that has been so potent for good as "the pillar of Simeon."

To judge of it, a few words more of Theodoreetus, an unexceptionable witness in the case, will be sufficient : "The rumor of his sanctity being spread abroad, all hastened to come ; not only those in his neighborhood, but from the greatest distances ; they brought with them their relatives and friends, affected with all kinds of diseases. The roads around appeared to be as many large rivers, carrying along waves of human beings. They came not only from this country—Syria—but there were Ismaelites, Persians, Armenians, Iberians, and Homerites. From the West likewise you could see Spaniards, Britons, Gauls hastening on with men of other nations in those parts of the world. But chiefly the Ismaelites rushed on in greater number. . . ."

The fact is evident from many incidents of the life of Simeon that the posterity of the son of Agar were his children of predilection, and that he labored for them with an extraordinary zeal and affection. They were for him what the negroes of South America were for Claver, the rude mountaineers of the Cevennes for John F. Regis, and the poor fishermen of the Coromandel coast for Francis Xavier. He was in this respect a worthy follower of Hilarion, whose indulgence went so far as to bless that crowd of Ismaelites who were going to the temple of *Venus Lucifer*, or *Astarte-Morning-Star*, merely because they promised him they would "worship Christ rather than a stone."

They flocked to him first from the neighborhood of Emesa and Palmyra ; then from the vast wilderness of sand which stretches from Arabia Petræa in the west to the Persian Gulf in the east ; and finally from the immense solitudes of *Arabia Deserta*. They were no more than rich people whose endless caravans traded, ages before, from the Himyar region in the south to the wealthy and populous countries of Asia Minor, or of blooming Iran. We do not see that

they brought to the foot of the pillar of Simeon innumerable droves of camels laden with spices, frankincense, or gold. They merely at this time hunted the wild ass of the desert to feed upon its flesh, and when they were not successful in the chase, their last resource was to kill some of their remaining camels to appease the pangs of hunger. Theodoretus asserts that one of the great endeavors of Simeon was to make them abandon the use of such loathsome food, and adopt some other, which he does not specify.

To this they had been reduced by the encroachments of civilization. The Romans, on the one side, had driven them from Palestine, Cœlesyria, and the borders of Asia Minor, where they formerly thronged and prospered. The Persians, on the other, did not allow them any more to ramble in Mesopotamia, where formerly Xenophon had met with them, nor even in the Elamite region near Susa, and around the Persian Gulf, one of their ancestral haunts so congenial to their habits, and their roving life. They were thus literally confined to arid solitudes of sand and rocks; and being no more able to carry on a successful trade, they fell on predatory chances, and were fast becoming the notorious robbers and cut-throats that the modern Bedouins are known to be. The only prospect that could remain to them was to change their customs, and adopt a more sedentary and civilized life. This Simeon, as well as Euthymius and Hilarion before him, endeavored to effect; and if his labors and those of his fellow-monks had not been thwarted by the Moslem fanaticism that so soon after carried them along in its fury, they would certainly have yielded entirely to the sweet persuasion of their Christian apostles and educators.

No one can know precisely what a proportion of them relatively to their whole number were converted to Christ by the monks of Palestine, in the solitudes of Arabia Petrea on one side, and by those of Upper Syria from Antioch to Nisibis, and in the wilds of *Arabia Deserta*, on the other. From many incidents related in the *Vita Patrum* of Rosweide, and in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Theodoretus, the number must have been immense. No doubt many of them fell off afterward, and returned gradually to their first savage customs. Yet if the movement had not been arrested by Mahometanism, it is very likely that the great measure of Mavvia, spoken of above, adopted for the spiritual direction of the more refined tribes of Ghassan and Benu-Salih, would have been extended likewise to the ruder Ismaelites. They would have had their bishops of the same blood, race,

and language ; and thus the good done among them at first would have been perpetuated, at least in as great a degree as it was among the Abyssinians in the south.

The previous pages have established the fact that Arabia at the beginning of the fifth century was in a fair way of becoming Christian. There was only a small part of it which does not appear to have shared in the blessing. This is the rude country around Medina and Mecca, stretching along the central part of the coast of the Red Sea. Neither the Christianity of the Himyarites, from the south, nor that of the monasteries of Palestine and Syria, from the north, seems to have reached that unfortunate spot, destined to become a plague-stricken center, from which would radiate the virus of Mussulmanism, strong enough in its malignity to blast the hopes of mankind over at least one-third of the globe. The Caaba is the only edifice which is certainly known to have been a pagan temple native to Arabia. The one mentioned in the life of Hilarion, to which he found multitudes flocking, had been evidently a former Phœnician edifice, raised in the desert of Cadesberne ; since the worship of *Astarte-Morning-Star*, under the shape of a white conical stone, belonged to the Phœnician superstition. The Caaba, on the contrary, was an Arabian edifice, devoted to the native Arabian idolatry. It is now ascertained that the city of Mecca is not older than the fifth century of our era. Previous to this, the Caaba temple arose alone in the valley where this city of Moslem pilgrimage now stands. Later inquirers believe that this monstrous edifice was a real Arabian Pantheon, where three hundred and sixty idols were worshiped, besides the celebrated black stone, which was the chief object of adoration. Caussin de Perceval, however, maintains that there always remained in this focus of superstition for the whole country, a precious relic of the former monotheism of the Arabs. Its name was then not Mecca or the Caaba, but Bayt-Allah—*Domus Dei*. A statue of Abraham, it is said, was kept there ; and the temple itself was thought by the ignorant Ismaelites of the period, to have been built by Abraham himself and his son Ismael. On this account the inhabitants of this part of Arabia were inclined to monotheism ; and before Mahomet appeared they often embraced, for that reason, Judaism, or even Christianity. This is now the well-grounded opinion of the most recent inquirers ; and consequently the pretended fact, often quoted to the glory of the founder of Mussulmanism, that he abolished idolatry in Arabia, and made the worship of one God the prevailing dogma over a great part

of the globe, is without real foundation. Idolatry had in truth already disappeared from the greater part of the country ; it would soon have completely vanished from the whole peninsula ; and the energy of the Arabian race would have been directed to the propagation of the pure doctrines of Christ, and not of the often insipid and always deleterious rhapsodies of the Koran.

##### 5. *The Christianity of Arabia the same as that of Rome and Greece.*

A last question remains to clear up in the present discussion, namely, What kind of Christianity was in the act of evolution among the Arabs, when the destiny of their peninsula and of a great part of the Eastern world was suddenly changed ? Was it not a doctrine very different from the one preached among the Greeks and the Romans ? What proof have we that it was the same pure belief and exalted morality ? A decisive answer will be given to these questions in a short review of the martyrdom of Arith—or Arethas—and his four thousand companions among the Himyarites. The language we shall hear, the spectacle we shall witness, reproduce so exactly what was seen and heard a short time previous all over the Roman world, and at this very moment in the extensive Persian Empire, that it is impossible to find any difference between all those Christian heroes ; and they are all to be acknowledged at once as the children of the same mother, namely, the holy Catholic Church, whose early destinies we are precisely describing.

The precious document containing the detailed narrative of this martyrdom is fortunately unexceptionable. The new Bollandists have published it in their tenth volume of October, with admirable and most judicious comments. The task of the writer in such a case as this, is, therefore, easy ; but the just satisfaction of the reader requires a few words to be said on the trustworthiness of the account given in these *Acts*.

First, it agrees, except in a few trifling details, with a most important letter of Simeon Beth-Arsamensis, written at that time to Mar Simeon, Abbot of Gabula. Yet the writer of the *Acts* had not seen this letter ; since not a single word of it is quoted in his narrative, which gives the same facts in a completely different phraseology, and in an altogether dissimilar, though much better order. We have, therefore, a story recounted by two contemporary authors unknown to each other, who had not seen each other's writing, and still con-

cur absolutely in the same statements. Simeon Beth-Arsamensis was one of the two companions of Abraham, sent, in the year 524, by the Emperor of Constantinople, Justin I., to Mundhir III., king of Hirta, the Arabian city near Babylon. The object of the embassy was to treat for peace between the Byzantine Empire and the powerful tribe of the Benu-Salih, usually allied with the Persians against Rome. This year—524—happened to be the one following the martyrdom of Arethas and his companions. The Byzantine envoys did not find Mundhir in his capital, but went to meet him in Central Arabia, where he had gone at the head of an army.

They traveled, it seems, ten days in the desert in a southern direction, and arrived at the Arabian encampment of Mundhir, not far from Mecca. The envoys of Dhu Nowas, the Jewish Himyarite despot, who had put to death the holy martyrs, had anticipated them, and brought to the Arabian king or chieftain, a letter, giving the tyrant's version of the affair. It is from this letter of Dhu Nowas that Simeon received the first news of the martyrdom, and of its principal circumstances. But when he returned to Hirta, he met there a friend of Arethas dispatched anteriorly to that city, who, on hearing of the catastrophe, had sent back a confidential agent to the Himyarite region, and thus had received a faithful account of the whole transaction, which he communicated to Simeon Beth-Arsamensis. It is, therefore, from both narratives of Dhu Nowas and the friend of Arith, that Simeon composed his own, which he sent to his friend Mar Simeon, abbot of Gabula, that he might forward the whole to the Catholic archbishop of Alexandria. His further object was that through this prelate and Justin of Constantinople, the Emperor of Axum, Elesbaa, should be apprised of it, and urged to declare war against Dhu Nowas. This was actually done the year following, when Elesbaa put an end to the power of the tyrant, and restored the Christian religion in South Arabia.

All these facts have been fully ascertained; and the proofs of them can be found not only in the *Acta Sanctorum*, but likewise in the learned work of Caussin de Perceval. The *Acts* of the martyrdom of St. Arethas, or Arith, consequently, agreeing with this most remarkable letter, their genuineness is indubitable. Of this production of Simeon Beth-Arsamensis, it may as well be stated here that it is written in the purest Arabic, so that Michaelis has thought it worthy of being republished entire in his *Chrestomathia Arabica*.

Secondly, all the details contained in these *Acts* reproduce so

exactly the general occurrences of the period in the Himyar country, in the whole of Arabia, in Ethiopia itself, and the Byzantine Empire, that the reader acquainted with general history cannot doubt that the document was written at that very time. There is not, moreover, in the whole narrative, a single mistake of geography, social customs, and personal character, so that all the intrinsic proofs of genuineness are present; and it would be difficult to find in all antiquity a document so acceptable to the most strict criticism. It was probably written originally in Ethiopic, or perhaps in Greek; but from this primitive draft, the Bollandists think it must have been translated into Syriac, out of which the actual Greek copy published in the *Acta Sanctorum* was derived. Boissonade, who had seen this manuscript, gave to the world another taken from the same National Library of Paris, and nearly altogether uniform with the one used by the Bollandists. The literary state of the Himyar region at the time explains this multiplicity of idioms. The Christian clergy of *Arabia Felix* was certainly composed of bishops, monks, and priests from Ethiopia, Syria, and the Greek Empire.

Thirdly, from several particularities mentioned in these *Acts*, it is strictly inferred that they cannot have been written before 524, nor long after that epoch. The year itself cannot be ascertained; but the space of time in which they *must* have been composed is so restricted that the reader becomes naturally convinced that it was directly after the victory of Elesbaa over Dhu Nowas, in 525. It is known by the history of the Ethiopian king, that shortly after his triumph he requested from the Patriarch of Alexandria, that he should send to Southern Arabia a Catholic bishop; and that his petition was granted. It is naturally presumed that at this time, when the Christian religion was publicly re-established all over the country, the holy martyrs, victims of the persecution of Dhu Nowas, were remembered, and their *Acts* written, under the supervision of the new bishop sent by the Patriarch of Alexandria.

This is the document from which we will be able to judge how far the Himyarite Christians had imbibed the genuine sentiments of the religion for which so many suffered in Greece, in Italy, in Asia, a few years previous, and many were about the same time suffering in Persia. The *Acts* themselves are preferred to the letter of Simeon Beth-Arsamensis, because, first, they are a public and official document, which ought always to be preferred to a private letter; and, secondly, they must have been compiled from the direct testi-

mony of many persons who had witnessed the heroic death of Arethas, whilst the letter reproduced only the second-hand narrative of two persons who reported what they had heard from the actors and spectators in the scene. These dry details were necessary for a just appreciation of the whole scene which is now to be displayed before us.

The country of the ancient Sabeans in Arabia Felix had received the Gospel long before the sixth century, and had become even a center of Christianity for the whole peninsula of Arabia. This chapter has given the proof of it, although in a very summary and unsatisfactory manner. Nedjran, a very important city of this prosperous region, contained, perhaps, for its size more Christians than any other. A few words have been said on Faymiyun, its first apostle, according to several Arabic chronicles and legends. It is certain, at least, that a few years before the occurrences which we are going to relate, there was a bishop at Nedjran, called Paul, evidently a virtuous man, full of active zeal, who, on this account, incurred the hatred of the enemies of the faith to such a degree that in the persecution which followed his bones were dug out of the grave, reduced to ashes, and thrown to the winds.

Before this time the kings of Axum, chiefly Tazena, and Elesbaa himself, had invaded the country, conquered it, and favored the spread of the Christian religion, which they professed themselves. They invariably, after such expeditions as these, placed on the throne of the country a Christian monarch, who governed, in fact, in their name, as they took on their monuments the titles of kings of the Himyarites. But after this formality had been fulfilled, when they had returned to Abyssinia, rebellions often took place which they could not as often quell directly ; so that kings arose in Mareb—the ancient Saba—either indifferent to Christianity or even fiercely opposed to it.

Dhu Nowas was one of these. The way he ascended the throne is related differently in Arabic chronicles ; but the fact itself cannot be disputed. His name takes so many shapes, according to the nationality of the various writers, that it is often scarcely recognizable. It becomes *Zura Ibn Caab* under the pen of later Mussulman writers ; *Dimion* in Syriac documents ; *Damian*, *Damnus*, and even *Dunaan* in Greek interpretation ; finally, *Fi Neas* in Ethiopic. Etymologists, consequently, will do well not to attempt any great historical discovery from his name.

The fact of his becoming a Jew is as certain as that of his being king of the Himyarites ; but as differently accounted for in the various Arabic, Ethiopic, and Greek chronicles. Allusion has already been made several times to the presence of Judaism in Southern Arabia from a very early period. The most recent archaeologists attribute its origin in the country to the dispersion of Judah under Nabuchodonosor the Great. This, at least, is the positive opinion of Antoine d'Abbadie. Caussin de Perceval, without being opposed to it, thinks that the Jewish colony of Arabia Felix was formed originally of various migrations, going back to the highest antiquity, but considerably increased at the time of the defeat of the Jews by Pompey ; later on, after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus ; and finally, in consequence of the punishment inflicted on Judea by Hadrian, who endeavored to make a pagan city of Jerusalem. It is indubitable that Jews in large numbers have existed in the southern part of Arabia from a very early period. We have seen lately that many Arabs embraced Judaism before Mahomet appeared among them ; and that this was in great part the result of the inclination of the race in general for monotheistic doctrines. Wherever Christianity appeared in any part of Arabia, Judaism was sure to be found at its side ; and although the Christians certainly predominated in the city of Nedjran, the *Acts of St. Arethas* prove that there were many Jews among them.

Dhu Nowas having become a Hebrew proselyte, carried his zeal so far as to wish to propagate his new creed by force. It seems that he said : "He would retaliate on the Christians of Arabia for the persecutions of the Jews in Europe." He knew, it seems, little of history, if he thought that Pompey, Titus, and Hadrian had been so many Christian emperors, or generals. The popular risings against the Jewish race of some deluded Christians during the middle ages had not yet taken place ; and we do not read that Constantine had persecuted the Jews, although he obliged them to respect the Christian religion and its emblem, the Cross, in Jerusalem.

Animated with such feelings, Dhu Nowas raised an army and went to lay siege before Nedjran, the city of the whole country which contained the greatest number of worshipers of Christ. What was then the state of it, and what estimate ought we to form of its inhabitants ? It is proper here to derive this information from the *Acts* themselves.

The city is called, *πόλις μυριανδρος*, which supposes a very

large number of inhabitants. The Latin text says, "a city whose inhabitants could not be numbered." It had received Christianity a very long time previously.\* These words confirm undoubtedly the opinion expressed a few pages back, that Nedjran might have been evangelized by Pantænus or even by Bartholomew. The authors of the *Acta Sanctorum*, in their commentary, infer from it a much more recent epoch, namely, the middle of the fifth century, that is, seventy-five years before the occurrences therein related. But it cannot possibly be admitted that an event which had happened so very recently, and which, in fact, men still living might have witnessed, can be said to have occurred *ἀπὸ μακρῶν καὶ παλαιῶν τῶν χρόνων*. We would translate the passage literally, *In ancient times and long before our age*. Can the words *ἀπὸ τῶν χρόνων* in the plural form, qualified by the epithets *μακρῶν καὶ παλαιῶν*, be used for a century not yet elapsed? It might much more correctly refer to the time of Pantænus or of Bartholomew himself.

One of the martyrs, a holy woman called Ruma, speaking of herself and her family, says in the letter of Simeon Beth-Arsamensis: "Women of Nedjran, whoever you may be, Christian, Jews, or Gentiles, listen to me. You know that I am a Christian, and all my race and my ancestors were." This is translated from the Arabic. In the Greek Acts, instead of "ancestors," we read, it is true, *πᾶσα συγγένεια μον*; but it is well known to Hellenists, that these last words mean, as well, *ancestry*, as living relatives; and the exact sense of the phrase can be determined only by the text of the letter just quoted. Ruma, therefore, asserted, in the presence of all the women of the city, that not only herself and her actual family were Christians, but her ancestors before her were known as such for so long a time, that she could not name a single one among them who had been either Jew or pagan. There were therefore, in Nedjran, families known as Christian households from time immemorial; and the city seems to have been composed of classes of people, either Christian, or Jew, or Gentile, living all friendly together; and this state of things had endured from a distant epoch, which no one cared to determine.

This must not make us suppose, that on this account there was either indifference among the worshipers of Christ, or indistinctness in their professed belief. The first supposition is evidently con-

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\* *παραλαβοῦσα τὴν πίστιν . . . ἀπὸ μακρῶν καὶ παλαιῶν τῶν χρόνων*.

tradicted by all the circumstances of their martyrdom ; and the second by the text of the *Acts*, which say, that “they worshiped the consubstantial and Holy Trinity ;” they were, therefore, ὁμούσιοι, and not **Arians**. They exclaimed a little farther on, “We have been taught to venerate and adore the Almighty God and his Word, by whom all things were made, and the Holy Spirit, who vivifies all things. . . . One God, in Three Persons.” Thus, although living at the end of the world, their theology was exact ; and they were acquainted with the decisions of several Councils since that of Nice, which they had received with submission, without once falling into the snares of heresy.

The army of Dhu Nowas, when he encamped before Nedjran, amounted, according to the document we follow, to one hundred and twenty thousand men. That number, at least, was required to capture a city which contained “an innumerable multitude of inhabitants.” The proclamation he set forth was worthy of the man : “Whoever among the disciples of the Galilean denied the Trinity, would enjoy honor and liberty in his dominions. He had already killed the Christians and their monks, and razed their churches to the ground, wherever he met them. The same fate awaited the inhabitants of Nedjran, who would remain obstinate in their errors.” We abridge the text, yet translate literally what is here given.

The answer that came from within the walls was the one given in the last paragraph : “We have been taught,” etc. But there was a phrase addressed to the Jew which must be quoted : “The same only Power we venerate and adore which our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Samuel, and all the prophets have venerated.” These Christians of Nedjran were, therefore, well instructed in their religion. They published aloud they were the true children of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Dhu Nowas had no right to usurp the title ; since he did not adore in truth the omnipotent God whom the posterity of Abraham, according to the Spirit, was to worship forever. It is very remarkable that in a country where so much of the old carnal Judaism has remained during so many ages, the Christians of the sixth century should have known so well the union of both Testaments, yet the prevalence in the New of the promises made formerly to Abraham, to the exclusion of his posterity according to the flesh. The Abyssinians of our days would not speak with so much precision and exactness on that

point as the inhabitants of Nedjran did twelve hundred and fifty years ago.

It will be interesting, consequently, to look at some distinct individualities among those who from within the walls addressed to the Himyarite tyrant the bold language quoted above. The first of these is certainly Arethas, placed invariably, by all, at the head of this illustrious troop of martyrs. The Arabic form of his name is Harith; and our attention is powerfully arrested when we hear from Caussin de Perceval that the government of Nedjran was at this time vested in the tribe of Harith Ibn Caab, which name is ascertained to belong likewise to our Arethas. Thus he was then the head of the city, and its chief magistrate. Dhu Nowas himself, in these *Acts*, states that the father of Harith had been also the ruler of Nedjran and its vicinity; and he calls him "a venerable old man." There can be no doubt, therefore, that Arethas belonged to the tribe of Harith Ibn Caab, was then at its head, and had been a long time a Christian, if not all his life. It is calculated by the Bollandists that he had then reached the age of ninety-five, and had embraced the Christian religion when he was only seventeen years old. Besides the name of Harith, which he bore on account of his chieftainship, he was also called Abdallah Ibn Thamir, from his father; and thus is he designated by Ibn-Khaldun, who makes him not only the chief magistrate of Nedjran, but also its pontiff or bishop, when Dhu Nowas laid siege to the city. If so, however, he must have been consecrated only since the death of Paul, the previous bishop.

It is, therefore, a sort of Patriarch who appears before us. At the same time king of his people, pontiff of the Christians living in the city or around, a pious priest and a well-informed theologian. Hear how well he understood the great dogma of Redemption: "When man, created at the image of his Maker, lost his original purity, the divine Word, coming down from heaven by the decree of the Father, took up our fallen nature, and in his own body nailed sin to the cross. Thus our humanity, whose nature he had assumed, became the Victim of the whole human race to appease God the Father." Any one acquainted with the exactness of language required by modern Catholic theology, is surprised to find it so perfect on the lips of an Arab of the sixth century, who most probably had never left his own native country, nor sat in any of the great councils of the period. There is no need of repeating that the *Acts*, from which these words are taken, were certainly written a very short time after

they were pronounced, and must have reproduced exactly the utterances of the holy man.

But besides his piety and science, we must likewise admire his patriotism, his prudence, and his bravery, so clearly brought forth by the same document. His patriotism, so well manifested by the ardent love he bore the city of his birth, over which he ruled with so much dignity and equity. His prudence and courage, shining most gloriously in these other expressions taken from the same speech of Arethas addressed to the Jewish tyrant : "I deeply grieve for the Christians of the city. I had warned them not to open their gates, nor believe in thy words ; but they would not listen to me. I had advised them to come out against thee, and fight for the people of Christ ; this also they refused to do. I was confident that by placing myself at their head, I would, in the name of Christ my Master, conquer and smite thee, as Gideon with three hundred men put myriads to flight."

The recital of the martyrdom which follows is certainly one of the most moving in the annals of the Christian Church. Arethas speaks like another Ignatius of Antioch, when he exclaims : "Blessed I am ! for in my old age Christ my Master has thought me worthy of dying for him ! I know now that my Lord loves me. He had given me length of days, many children and grandchildren, to the fourth generation ; he had sustained my courage and strength in the wars I had to undertake ; but to-day I rejoice more than ever, because the days of my long life are to end like those of the holy martyrs." The whole document would have to be copied to do justice to the sublime sentiments it contains ; and the reader cannot but feel that those Arab Christians had been raised by the new religion they had embraced to the highest summit of heroism. But we have to cut down the narrative to a mere shred.

Yet there is a particularity in these *Acts* which cannot be omitted on any account. It is the great personality of holy Ruma, of whom a word has been said. The greatness of her soul was on a par with that of Perpetua at Carthage, or Agnes at Rome.

Dhu Nowas having ordered that the veil which covered her and her two daughters should be taken off, and their faces exposed to view—an unbearable outrage in the eyes of all Arabian women—Ruma exclaims : "Illustrious and free women, every one of whom feels as I do ; listen to me, O ye, to whatever faith you may belong, Christian, Jewish, or Gentile. . . . You know, most dear

sisters, that this is the second time you can look upon my uncovered face. You did so first, on the day of my earthly and transitory marriage ; you do so now on this day of my spiritual and eternal wedlock. Look on me and on my daughters ; since you will not find any among you more beautiful. I do not say so to triumph over you on account of a perishable beauty ; but to exalt that loveliness of virtue which true wisdom alone confers. It is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which protects and keeps it in its integrity. Owing to his guardianship I have kept the chastity of a wife, and my daughters the purity of virgins."

Did ever the greatest female converts of Rome or of Greece, in the first ages of Christianity, show a keener appreciation of the most exalted virtue than Ruma, born and bred in the far-distant Nedjran, in the immediate neighborhood of Aden, and the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb ? Our limits forbid longer quotations ; but the entire *Acts* of St. Arethas and his companions would have to be given in full to render justice to the exalted feelings of the Christians of Arabia Felix, at the beginning of the sixth century.

The whole of this noble struggle can be sketched in a few moments. Dhu Nowas, having entirely surrounded Nedjran with his large army, soon perceived the difficulty of the enterprise. The courage of the inhabitants, and their great number, opposed to his fury an obstacle which he had not foreseen ; and, although the multitude captive within the walls soon began to suffer all the horrors of a siege, the besiegers themselves were also decimated by death on the battle-field, and no doubt by disease and desertion. The tyrant, therefore, had recourse to perfidy ; and he solemnly promised, that if the gates of the city were opened, he would neither oblige the inhabitants to renounce their religion, nor impose upon them any burden, but the payment of the tax they owed him as tributaries, and in part subjects. Arethas advised the people not to trust these fine words ; but rather to fight under his leadership, and repel by force an attack which they had not provoked. As was seen, his advice was not followed. Dhu Nowas, once admitted in the city, openly proclaimed that perjury was a virtue against Christians ; and he began, with the help of his brutal soldiers, the frightful butchery which the *Acts* relate at length. The details are too sickening to deserve a place in these pages. The clergy, the monks, and the virgins consecrated to God, were the first to suffer by fire, to the number of four hundred and twenty-seven. Then the noblest

among the people were either beheaded or put to death by tortures, with Arethas, to the number of three hundred and forty. Finally, all the faithful of the common class who had not escaped to the mountains, where a multitude of them fled instantly, when the Jewish army entered, were indiscriminately butchered, and the whole is said in these *Acts* to have amounted to the number of four thousand two hundred and fifty-two.

They all died for the love of Christ. For in this distant part of Arabia, that holy love was, as everywhere else, the great distinguishing mark of the Christians. It was for Him that Arethas gave his life ; for him that so many of his brides—the virgins consecrated to him—shed their blood ; for him that the whole multitude preferred death to apostasy. Christ was the true Shepherd of the flock for which he had died on the cross, and the flock in return gladly consented to be immolated rather than acknowledge another guide or ruler. Where, therefore, could be found better Christians than in that city so long unknown to us, and which only lately began to revive to the recollection of Europeans ?

Thus in distant Arabia virtue and heroism flourished ; and the same spectacle was offered to the admiration of mankind, which astonished at the same epoch, or shortly before, the pagans of Rome, of Greece, of Persia, of the far Orient. Thus did the Church deserve the name of Catholic from her birth. That universality so long before promised to the world by the prophets of God, suddenly expanded to the utmost bounds of the earth. All races of men were found equally worthy of it, and rushed with a holy impetuosity to the practice of its holy precepts, and to the sanction by their blood of its truth and divinity. Who but God himself could inspire the Cushites of Yemen as well as those of Meroë, the Joctanides of Central Arabia as well as the Bedouins of its northern wilderness, the corrupt Syrians and Phrygians, as well as the refined Greeks and Persians, with such a sublime self-sacrifice as was daily witnessed everywhere on earth in those first ages of Christianity ?

But Arabia particularly deserves to attract our attention, because it is from a small, and until that time profoundly unknown, spot of its western border, that was to arise the scourge destined to arrest for a thousand years the progress of Catholicity in the East. Had it not been for Mahomet and his Saracens ; had it not been for the nomads of Toorkestan who several centuries afterward embraced his errors ; neither Central Africa nor Eastern Asia could have opposed any

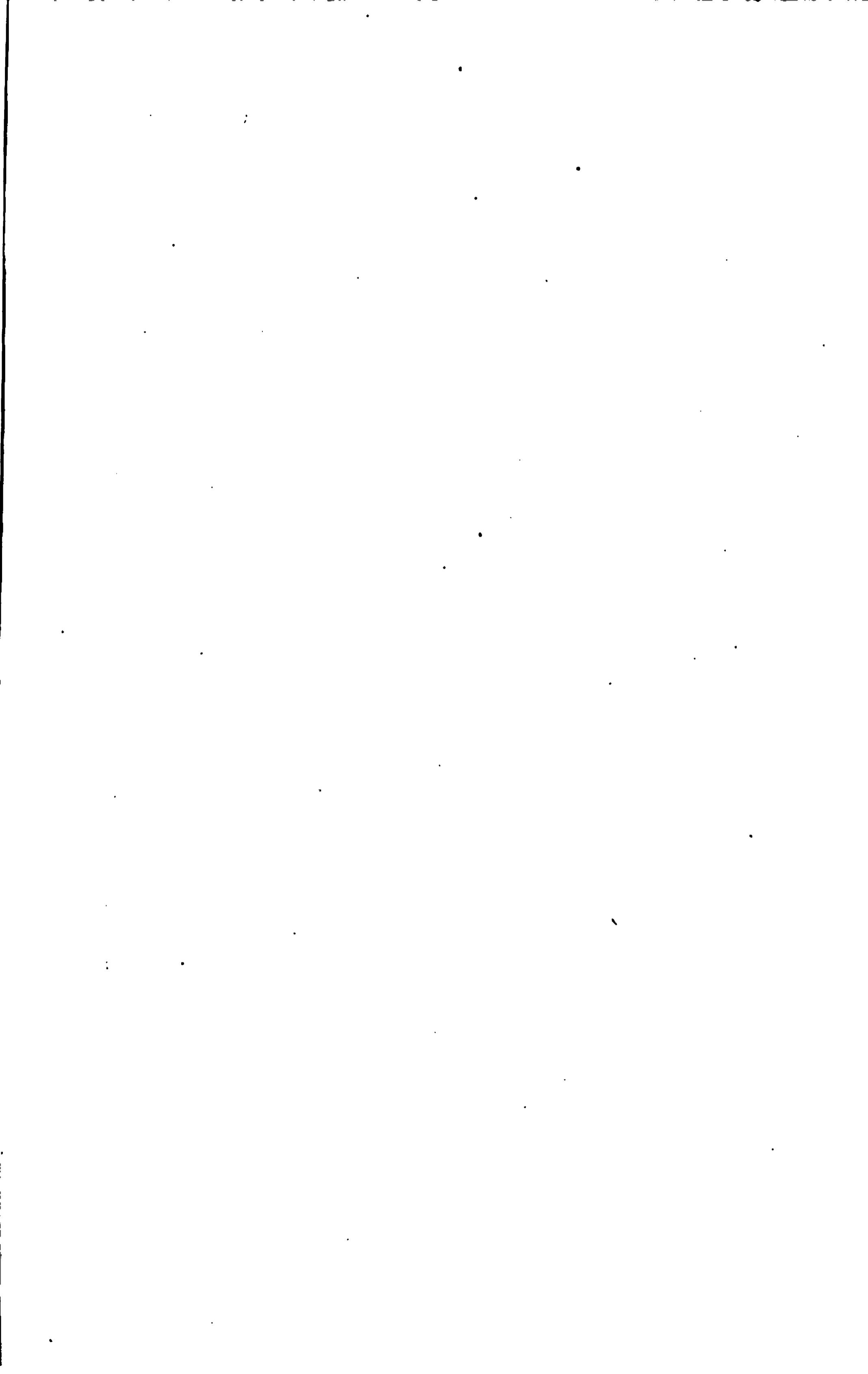
obstacle to the spread of Catholicity on their broad surface. Buddhism would have been checked in the East, and fetichism in the South. The great lakes where the Nile takes its source would, in a few years, have heard and received the all-conquering message of the Gospel. The sweet list of Christian virtues engraved yet to-day on the ruins of churches in Nubia, would have soon appeared on the shores of what we call now the Victoria and Albert Nyanza; and from the various water-sheds of these highest plains of the continent of Africa, the doctrines of Christ would have advanced gradually toward its southern cape, the luxuriant southwestern coast of Congo, and the western desert which from the banks of the Nile stretches away to the very shores of the Atlantic Ocean.

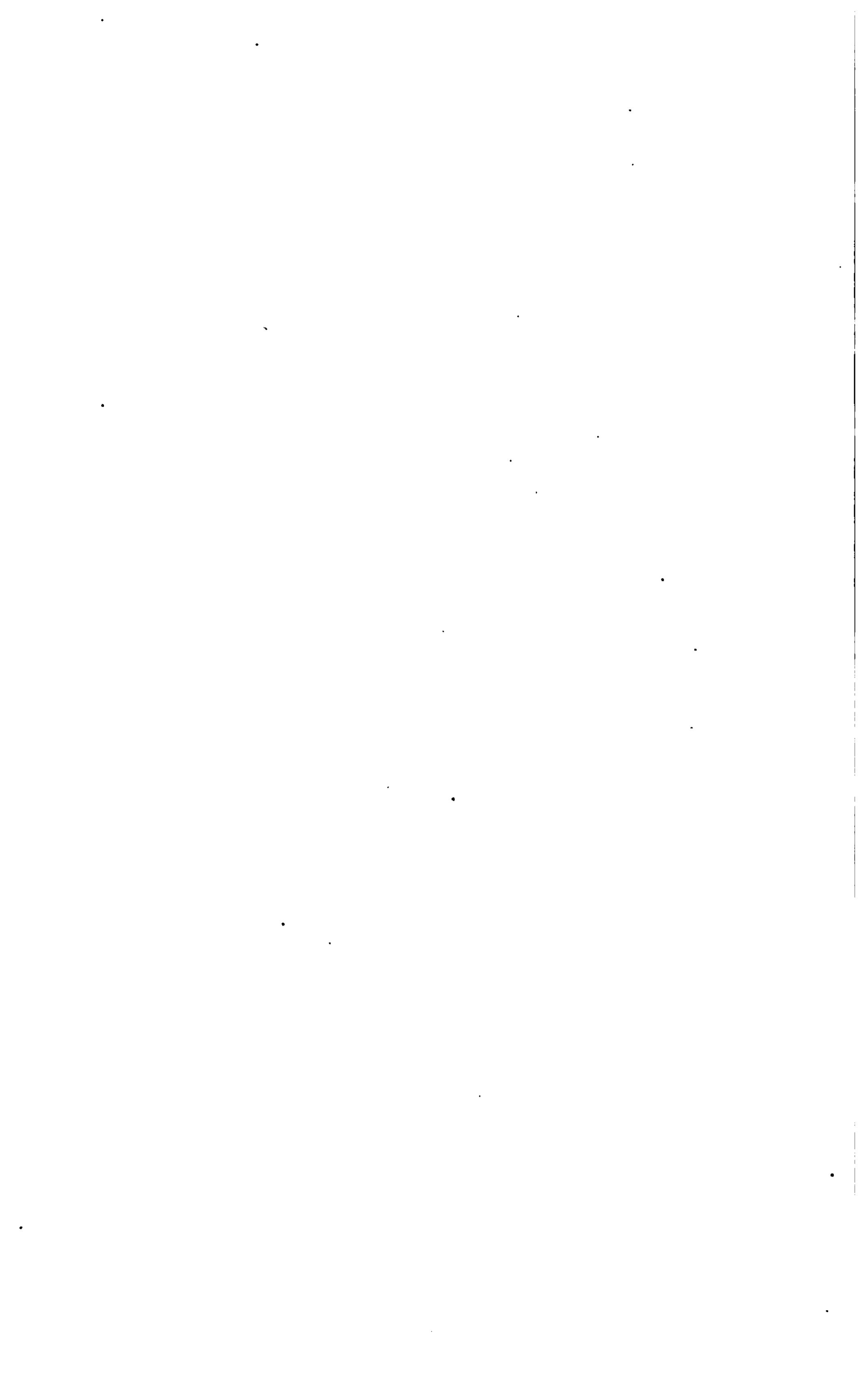
As to Asia, it shall be seen presently in detail, that long before Nestorianism invaded Hindostan and China, the Gospel had penetrated into the wild steppes of Tartary, and the rich plains of Samarkand and Balk; long before heretical missionaries were dispatched from Seleucia or Ctesiphon, bishops' sees and monasteries prospered on the coast of Cochin, and in the renowned island of Ceylon; in fact, all over Southern Asia, as well as all along its northern wilderness. Had it not been for the cimiter of the Turks, the ruins caused by the devastations of the Tartars would have been repaired by the powerful arm of the Christian Church; the wretched idolatry of Hindostan, and the worse impostures of Thibet would have given way to the worship of the true God, and Catholicity would have prevailed over the fairest portion of the globe, where it is now to be planted with infinite labor, and at the cost of most precious lives. But it is destined to be successfully rooted in that barren soil, and this present time may be said to be the moment chosen by Providence for it.

Is not Mahometanism crumbling to pieces, wherever it spread so fast and disastrously at first? Some writers pretend that it is on the eve of a new revival; but it is difficult to perceive the signs of it; and in the daily events that we witness, there is scarcely any of them more remarkable than the universal disorganization of Mussulmanism, all over the world. It is indubitable that it has lost everywhere its aggressive character, so prominent still a couple of centuries ago. Not only this, but in many countries it subsists politically, only through the tolerance of Europe. Who does not know that if Turkey exists as a Mahometan power, she owes it merely to the fact, that no Western nation wishes Constantinople to fall into

the hands of Russia? And they are right. The decree of Fate, however, that is, of Providence, has gone forth: the Padishah must, before long, leave his luxurious bowers on the shore of the Sea of Marmora. Where will the successor of Mahomet go, after he is driven away from Roumelia and Anatolia? For, if Asia Minor is left him, it will be but for a short time. We hope, as a Christian, that he will not be allowed to pollute Jerusalem with his presence. Mecca, in fact, is the only place where he can go decently, and receive the pilgrims that will yet acknowledge his sway. This is sufficient to prove, beyond contradiction, that Mussulmanism cannot be any more an obstacle in the way of the true messengers of God: and it is the only thing which can interest the reader at this moment.

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